



BLOW AS FIRKINS SHUTS YET AGAIN

By John Scott and Dave Callaghan

FIRKINS has ceased trading with the closure of 23 shops and loss of 104 jobs.

The 144-year-old Black Country bakery firm, which has had a troubled history in recent years, is in liquidation following 'difficult trading periods on the high street'.

Shocked staff were phoned at home on Sunday and told not to come to work this week.

Both Firkins and Wollaston bakeries have closed down.

Firkins have been axed in Halesowen Road, Netherton; New Street, Dudley; High Street, Lye and Princes End, Tipton. Wollastons have gone in Dudley High Street, Stourbridge High Street and Bridgnorth Road, Wollaston.

BRI, a Northampton-based business recovery and insolvency specialist, is now dealing with the situation. Firkins has been in and out of administration at least three times since 2000.

A statement from BRI read: "Following difficult trading periods on the high street, Newbridge Bakery (Retail) Ltd & Newbridge Bakery (Birmingham Retail) Ltd have announced that their shops trading as Firkins and Wollaston Bakery have closed and will cease to trade."

Creditors

"Unfortunately, despite efforts to improve shop profitability and because of the lack of new sales, the directors have taken steps to place the company into a creditors voluntary liquidation, which will result in the loss of 104 full and part-time jobs."

One staff member who asked not to be named, said: "The way we have been treated is absolutely disgusting. Some of those who have lost their jobs have been working for the firm for 20 years and this is the thanks they get."

"They get a phone call at home saying it's all over after showing a long-term commitment to the firm. There were no staff meetings and no official warnings before we got that bombshell phone call out of the blue at home on a Sunday morning."

Dudley councillor Ken Finch said: "It is a disaster for a firm that has been around Dudley town centre for many years. I feel sorry for those people who have been made redundant."

Mary Firkin started Firkins Bakery in 1870. When the Firkin family stopped owning the business, Ian Bolderston and his wife Sarah took control in 2006. Two years later, shops closed overnight and jobs were lost before Mr Bolderston bought the company again, this time from administration.

In 2011, Firkins announced it was closing its West Bromwich bakery with the loss of 40 jobs, but that its remaining 33 shops would survive. It was then revealed that former staff were owed £257,868 but only £17,800 was left over from the firm's liquidation.

Mr and Mrs Bolderston rescued the firm yet again in co-operation with another couple but the partnership collapsed in early 2013.

Gates removed from park in £3m renovation plan



The historic gates are removed from the entrance to Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge, to be renovated

THEY were originally modelled on the entrance to Buckingham Palace. Now the finely decorated gates at Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge are to get some tender, loving care as part of a £3.1 million renovation.

The 84-year-old wrought iron gates which mark the Heath Lane entrance, were removed in a painstaking process last weekend.

The Grade II listed gates were first put in place in 1931 after Ernest Stevens dedicated the park, named after his late wife Mary, to the people of Stourbridge.

Work to remove the ornate gates, which

haven't been modified or removed since they were installed, began on Saturday morning and workers remained on site until early evening. The gates will be sent away to be restored and repaired before they are returned to the park in July.

Important

Chairman of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park group, Councillor Heather Rogers, said: "These gates are such an important part of the park, which in turn is such an important place for the community."

"As far as I know, this is the first time the gates have ever been removed completely."

"They have been an enduring feature of the park since it was first donated to the people of Stourbridge by Ernest Stevens and were originally modelled on the gates outside of Buckingham Palace."

The gates have been removed as part of an overhaul of the park which has been funded by Lottery grants.

It will also see the bandstand, war memorial and pool updated, a new cafe and updated benches and railings.

AWARDS

Hospice scheme is put on shortlist

A £1 million expansion at Mary Stevens Hospice in Stourbridge has been nominated for a prestigious architecture award.

Work has been completed on the project as a home for a community care scheme.

The building has now been shortlisted for a Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) West Midlands award.

The rebuild and refurbishment project, in conjunction with KKE Architects Ltd, cost £1,069,000 which included a grant of £509,000 from the Department of Health.

The results will be announced in Birmingham at the end of April.

ROCK

Star Hunt tells of the Wonder years

BLACK Country rock star Miles Hunt will be sharing stories of his rock 'n' roll life when he goes back to his roots this weekend.

The frontman of Stourbridge indie group The Wonderstuff has released a book about the early years of the band - The Wonder Stuff Diaries 86-89 - and will be reading extracts at the Slade Rooms in Wolverhampton on Sunday.

He will also be performing tracks and taking questions from the audience from 8pm. Tickets are priced at £16.50.

JOBS

Aldi to create 80 posts with stores

AROUND 80 jobs will be created when two new Aldi stores are built in Stourbridge and Wyre Forest.

The creation of a store at the former home of the well known Bronx works, in Dudley Road, Lye, will bring 40 jobs. The site has been cleared following the demolition of the factory and a former fire-ravaged laser combat centre. A public consultation will be held at Lye Town FC, in Stourbridge Road, between 3 and 7pm on April 7.

The chain has also announced plans for a store on part of the former British Sugar factory site, on Stourport Road between Kidderminster and Stourport.

COMPETITION

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Dentist all smiles over nominations



Dentist Dr Edward Young

A DENTIST is all smiles after being nominated for two national awards.

Edward Young, who has been treating patients at Amblecote Dental Care in Brierley Hill since 2004 was shortlisted in both the Aesthetic Dentistry Awards and National Dental Awards.

In the first awards held on Friday, the 35-year-old was nominated in the Patient Choice Orthodontics category but lost out in the final.

He is now hoping to achieve success by being voted Young Dentist of the Year in the National Dental Awards. There are North and South categories and Dr Young is nominated in the North. The final will take place on April 17 in Birmingham.

The father-of-one, who is married to Chrissie, said: "This is the second year running that I have made it into a final. However, I was very proud and honoured to be given another chance to be invited to attend the two ceremonies with highly regarded dental professionals. I wish to thank fellow staff at Amblecote Dental Care as well as family and friends for their support.

"More importantly, I wouldn't have achieved this without my fantastic patients. My approach to dentistry is to treat the health of the mouth through a prevention, advice and education; and once healthy and stable, it enables a patient to realistically seek cosmetic and structural improvement which is then more likely to last for the longer term.

"I work as a general dentist, with special interests in cosmetic dentistry and orthodontics," he added.

The list of the finalists in both award ceremonies are compiled by a judging panel, consisting of practitioners and also members of various leading dental professional associations.

Major player in drugs racket sent to prison

AN anxious look helped put a major player in a cannabis growing racket behind bars for three and a half years.

Philip Payne stared in such a strange way at two plain clothes police officers as his BMW travelled in the opposite direction past their unmarked car that they turned to follow him, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Mr Mark Phillips, prosecuting, said: "Their attention was drawn by his behaviour. He took a good long look at them as if suspicious of their true identity."

The 23-year-old got stuck in traffic while waiting to turn from Pedmore Road, Lye and the unmarked car drew up alongside him, it was said.

Mr Phillips added: "The defendant saw the officers, pulled out on the wrong side of the road and accelerated violently towards oncoming traffic while going round a blind bend. There would have been a head on collision with potentially dire consequences if any vehicle had been coming in the opposite direction."

Pursuit

Police abandoned the chase because of the risk to other road users but one of the officers involved in the aborted pursuit saw Payne come out of the front door while driving past a flat in Stourbridge Road, Lye five days later on February 26, the court heard. The BMW was parked nearby.

Two uniformed officers then approached the defendant who put up a struggle and had to be 'subdued,' the court heard.

Mr Phillips said: "Police now knew where he lived and took the front door key to the flat from him."

They found £700 cash and some cannabis inside the property along with an iPhone that had film of cannabis cultivation and text messages that revealed he had links with a number of drug farms.

Mr Phillips concluded: "He was a significant figure in the operation."

Mr Richard Butcher, defending, said: "It is clear that others were involved with him and he had fallen in with bad company."

Payne from Stourbridge Road, Lye admitted dangerous driving and being involved in the production of cannabis. He was also banned from driving for two years.

TV host plays blinder at brewery



Eamonn Holmes who has been at the opening of the Sadler's Brewery with Chris Sadler and Ian King

A BREWERY helping to produce three million pints a year has been extended – with the help of broadcaster Eamonn Holmes.

Sadler's in Lye has gone from strength to strength leading bosses to open their second site in Station Drive.

It will run alongside the firm's long-established brewery at the Windsor Castle pub, in Stourbridge Road.

Television presenter Holmes was invited to celebrate the completion of work on the new £500,000 brewery – and he raised a glass with brewery bosses to mark the occasion.

Mr Holmes, who is friends with bosses at the brewery, then chatted with staff and customers who had gathered for the event.

Alongside the brewery, created in a former warehouse, a new upstairs bar has also been created which will open on Fridays and Saturdays.

It will also stage festivals, private parties and comedy evenings. Brewery sales director Ian King

said: "A lot of work has been put into creating the new brewery.

"Originally it was just an empty warehouse. Everything which is now in the building we have put in.

"It will work in conjunction with our existing brewery in Stourbridge Road and will allow a significant boost in the amount of beer we can brew annually."

The brewery is well-known for creating the Peaky Blinder ale, named after the Birmingham gang which inspired the hit BBC TV series.

Mrs Berridge said: "When we were first told the news, we were unsure about where to go within the hospital or who to turn to. It would have made such a huge difference to our family to be able to go to a place away from the ward, to an environment that was completely separate from the hospital itself."

Mr Berridge was given the news that his daughter Jordan's Osteosarcoma cancer was terminal in a small office on the hospital's Oncology Ward. She was 16 and was diagnosed with the cancerous tumour in her bones, in July 2012. She sadly died in April last year.

Parent gets behind drive for hospital fundraising

A FUNDRAISING drive for a new £1 million hospital centre to support families has been launched by two bereaved parents – one from Dudley.

Naomi Messer, together with Wayne Berridge, from Hinkley, launched the appeal for the new unit at Birmingham Children's Hospital where medical staff can give parents difficult news about their children's condition.

Mrs Messer and her husband John were told there was nothing else that could be done to support their son Noah with his treatment for leukaemia. This news was broken to them on the ward, with only a cubicle curtain for privacy.

Noah, who was a month off his third birthday, had been a patient at Birmingham Children's Hospital since he was 17-months-old and had received multiple operations, including a bone marrow transplant from his older brother Zack, now14, as well as various courses of radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Mrs Messer said: "When we were first told the news, we were unsure about where to go within the hospital or who to turn to. It would have made such a huge difference to our family to be able to go to a place away from the ward, to an environment that was completely separate from the hospital itself."

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Canalside homes already in demand

PLOTS are now on sale at a former factory site where 80 homes are being built.

Building work is under way at the old Lloyds metal works, off Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill.

The engineering firm once made propellers during the Second World War before shifting production to heavy duty chains and starter rings. But the firm moved production to India by the start of 2006, leading to the factory being demolished.

Anne Wallace, regional sales and marketing director for Taylor Wimpey, said: "We are delighted, but not surprised, by the high levels of demand we're experiencing for our beautiful new homes at Lockside Walk."

Early prices include three-bedroom houses at £158,995.

Road blocked after two cars in collision

A BUSY road in Dudley was partially blocked following a crash between two cars. Firefighters were called to the Birmingham New Road at around 6.30pm on Friday. No-one was hurt.

One lane was blocked in both directions at the A457 Sedgley Road.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Machete attack — arrest made

A MAN has been arrested on suspicion of assault after another man was attacked with a machete in a King-swinnford park.

The 25-year-old victim, who has not been named, suffered injuries to his arm during the assault at King George VI Park on Saturday, March 21.

Police said a 23-year-old man from Dudley had been arrested following investigations. He has been bailed with conditions while enquiries continue.

Anyone with information is asked to call Force CID on the non-emergency 101 number.

Fossil names at town's new estate

PROPOSALS to name roads on a new estate of 43 homes in honour of a nature reserve have been approved.

UK Construction Ltd is building near Dudley's Wrens Nest Nature Reserve, which is famous for its fossils. The developer had proposed the names Fossil View, Calymene Mews and Silurian Mews. Calymene is the genus of trilobites — the famous 'Dudley bug' — while Silurian is the geological age of the rock in which the fossils are found.

Transport boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed gave the green light.

Photos on show at historic hall

A PHOTOGRAPHIC exhibition is being launched at Himley hall this weekend.

The Stourbridge Photographic Society will be putting their work from around the world on display at the historic hall.

The exhibition launches on Saturday and will remain at Himley Hall until September.

The photographs will be on display between 2pm and 5pm from Tuesday to Saturday.

Building society sees an increase in profits

THE Tipton & Coseley Building Society recorded increased profits last year despite the UK's ongoing economic challenges in the UK.

Its pre-tax profit figure of £2.75 million was up 7.2 per cent on 2013, and its savings balances grew to £327.36m. Its assets ended the year at £373m.

Richard Newton, the Tipton's chief executive, said it was 'a real achievement amid a continued difficult backdrop'.

Make a big splash

CHILDREN can make a splash with half-term activities in Dudley. Bostin Bruce, an inflatable aqua pool run, with obstacles and slide, will be open from 1.45 to 2.45pm on April 7 and 9 at Dudley Leisure Centre. It is suitable for eight-to-15-year-olds who can swim 25 metres or more and costs £2.80 per child.

Shock for resident as car crashes into walls

A CAR left the road and crashed through two brick walls, making a noise 'like an aircraft', according to a neighbour.

A resident who witnessed the crash in New Rowley Road, Dudley, was watching a war documentary in his front room when the BMW people carrier careered off the road at a right hand bend. It demolished a lamp post, two brick walls and a garden fence before coming to a rest on its side in the driveway.

The homeowner, who did not want to be named, said: "I was in the front room and all of a sudden it has come through like an aircraft and it made me jump."

He added when he went outside, two passers-by were already tending to the two men in the car, aged in their 50s and 20s, and had helped them from the vehicle. He then called for an ambulance following the crash at 4.30pm last Wednesday, March 25.

Two ambulances and a paramedic support officer in a rapid response car were sent to the scene.

One of the men suffered a head injury, while the other sustained damage to his back, though neither was seriously hurt and they were taken to Russells Hall Hospital for treatment.

Pensioner Harold Williams was visiting relatives in the road and was sitting in his Corsa when the crash happened on the opposite side of the road sending bricks and debris flying, narrowly missing his car.

He added: "It was really frightening."

Radio coverage for Election battle

A NATIONAL radio show is setting up home in Dudley for the General Election.

BBC Radio 4's World At One presenter Shaun Ley will be based in the town — which has two marginal constituencies, Dudley North and Dudley South — throughout the campaign.

Meanwhile, Afzal Amin, who resigned as Tory Prospective candidate for Dudley North has admitted he was 'foolish' for getting involved with the English Defence League, insisting he was the victim of a 'sting operation'.

He said he had resigned 'with a heavy heart and with much regret'. He added: "My resignation is about ensuring the best for the Conservative party, which is my main priority as we face this very important election."

Care home lodges plans to increase

A CARE home is planning to expand to ease pressure on Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital.

Wyncroft House in Kingswinford has lodged plans with Dudley Council to expand by nine bedrooms.

Extra staff for register office demand

EXTRA staff are being recruited for Dudley's new register office to cope with an expected soar in demand.

Dudley Council says it has already received 'a great deal of interest' from people interested in holding a ceremony in the Grade II listed building housing Lye and Wollescote Chapels.

The building in Cemetery Road, Lye, which houses identical Anglican and non-conformist chapels, is being converted into a venue for civil ceremonies.

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust has secured a £1million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out the work.

Once complete, the building will be leased to

Dudley Council to be used as a register office. It will have a waiting lobby and two reception areas as well as a wedding ceremony room and an office for staff.

The council is now looking to take on up to three new registration officers to work at Lye and at Priory Hall in Dudley.

Dudley Council's strategic director of resources and transformation Philip Tart said: "Priory Hall is an extremely popular wedding venue and we have already had a great deal of interest from people keen to get married at our new venue in Lye, once it's open. We're not yet taking bookings for Lye but know we need to recruit to fulfil both the existing, and future demand."

The venue will be used for marriages, citizenship

ceremonies, naming ceremonies, civil partnership ceremonies and for wedding vow renewals.

The building, which dates back to 1878, has been closed for the past 30 years after falling into disrepair. The chapel was used for Anglican and non-conformist purposes when it opened.

The Non-conformist chapel was closed in the 1970s and the Church of England chapel closed following a fire in 1993 which caused minor damage to the inside of the building.

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust is a charity dedicated to the conservation of buildings.

Chairman Bob Tolley said: "We will not just preserve but conserve this amazing building and put it to a sustainable new use."

Heartless thug created fear with imitation gun

A THUG who pointed an imitation gun at a house while on bail for two robberies has been jailed for six years and one month.

Arun Hudin, from Halesowen, struck first when he mercilessly ignored the pleas of a woman not to steal three gold chains that belonged to her recently deceased mother.

The 22-year-old tore the jewellery from around the neck of the victim and snarled: "Shut up or you are going to get hurt," Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Miss Joanne Wallbanks, prosecuting, said: "She had been the main carer of her mother who had died months earlier. She pleaded with the defendant and told him 'they are my mum's and she has just passed away' but that did not bother him."

Hudin and two other men snatched the ignition key out of a car in which the woman and a male friend were travelling as soon as it came to a standstill outside a parade of shops in New Invention, Willenhall, on May 20 last year.

The woman got out of the vehicle and tried to get away but he chased her and grabbed the chains, continued Miss Wallbanks. He also took £35 cash from the man in the car.

Hudin had been released on bail pending further inquiries when he got into an argument in Whitegates Road, Coseley, on July 21.

Mini-moto

The dispute stemmed from him riding a mini-moto bike. Hudin returned to the scene four hours later after getting an imitation firearm from his home.

Miss Wallbanks explained: "He stood outside the home of the person involved in the earlier confrontation, pulled out the black handgun, went through the motion of cocking it and pointed it at one of the windows. Those inside feared that it might be fired."

Mr Dean Kershaw, defending, said: "There had been trouble before with this group of boys and he wanted to show that enough was enough." The lawyer said the weapon had been a BB gun.

Hudin from Masters Lane, Halesowen, was found guilty of the two robberies at trial after denying the offences but admitted possession of an imitation firearm.

Judge Amjad Nawaz told him he was responsible for 'naasty robberies' and had created 'considerable fear' with the imitation firearm.

Action call over speeding traffic



Back, Vivienne North, John Chapple, Tony North. Front, Sylvia Bell, Lyn Jones and Robert Skidmore

COUNCILLORS say improvements will be made to a busy road in Sedgley following calls from residents. Campaigners had demanded action over speeding cars and heavy lorries in Northway.

More than 50 people attended a public meeting and called for safety measures, including a weight limit. The Northway Action Group for Road Safety say heavy goods vehicles have been more frequent during building

work for a housing estate in Gospel End. They also asked for a new pedestrian crossing at The Precinct and for action to ease traffic building up around Alder Coppice Primary School.

In a survey of 124 residents, 83 per cent expressed concern about the speeds. They also supported the installation of safety cameras. Group spokesman Tony North, said: "The road is not suited to heavy commercial traffic; it is

hilly, winding and residential in nature. It also serves a popular nursery and primary school."

Dudley Council's acting strategic director, John Miller, said: "There are plans for a mini roundabout and a pedestrian refuge, as well as resurfacing near Alder Coppice school."

"We are also proposing to introduce a safer routes to school scheme along The Northway which will include a 20mph zone."

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



A READER writes: "I was looking at the menu in a restaurant and was wondering what the 'Jeremy Clarkson Special' was. Then it hit me."

AND yes, I got it wrong. In March last year I wrote: "If Clarkson blacked-up and did an impression of Barack Obama singing The Sun Has Got His Hat On, he'd still be unsackable." But that was when we thought Clarkson's downfall might be caused by his mouth, not his fists.

WHAT really depressed me was the number of Brits prepared to excuse Clarkson anything simply because he is a celebrity they liked. I always thought it was part of the British character instinctively to stand up for little people against oafs. Apparently not.

ISN'T it odd that while so many MPs, supposedly the people's representatives, are in favour of HS2, it takes a committee in the House of Lords to recognise this pointless, ruinously expensive scheme for the madcap vanity project it is? The Lords say we don't need it and we can't afford it. Here, in the ermine-trimmed trappings of privilege, is the true voice of the people.

THIS is a good time to be a provincial. First, Ye Great Eclipse blazed in magnificence across the Midlands but was totally obscured by cloud in London. Admit it, did you not smile ever so slightly to see so many miffed Londoners? And then came the procession, lying-in-state and re-instatement of a box of bones formerly known as Richard III. It was a joyously provincial affair, sentimental and sometimes a bit naff (did we really need knights on armoured horses?) but well-intentioned and peculiarly moving. And if you doubted for a



moment that the London media elite felt this royal event should have taken place in the capital, you had only to hear Jon Snow's slip of the tongue as he welcomed us to proceedings "here in Westm, er, Leicester."

WHAT remains to be said about Afzal Amin, the (now former) Conservative candidate in Dudley North, exposed as a cloak-and-dagger wazzock? I simply do not get it. This country is full of decent, honest, hard-working people who would die for the chance to earn £62,000-a-year as an MP, and do a damn fine job. So why do party selection committees offer the job to an endless stream of oddballs? Maybe the weakness of the system is that it depends on people putting themselves forward. I recall a senior police officer who said anyone who wanted a firearm was, by definition, an unfit person to own one. Perhaps the same rule should apply to political candidates. Anyone seeking power should not be given it.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Firm fined after worker's hand crushed

A COMPANY has been fined £10,000 for a breach of health and safety rules after a maintenance engineer's hand was crushed at a factory.

The 40-year-old worker from Stourbridge was injured at Thyssen-Krupp (Materials) UK Ltd's site in Tyseley on July 9 last year.

Birmingham Magistrates Court heard he was removing chocks that had been used to hold up a pressure

beam while maintenance work was carried out. But as soon as they were removed, the beam fell on the engineer's hand.

He was off work for more than three months but has since returned to work at the company.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive revealed the company, a subsidiary of the Thyssen-Krupp group, had failed to provide

workers with adequate information, instruction and training or to appropriately manage the site maintenance programme.

The firm, based in Cox's Lane, Cradley Heath, admitted a breach of Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It was fined £10,000 for the breach and ordered to pay costs of £940.50.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE

inspector Paul Cooper said: "ThyssenKrupp Materials should have spent time working out a safe working methods for all maintenance tasks, especially those which were routine.

"There were no written risk assessments or safe systems of work in place."

No-one at the company was available for comment.

Jobs joy as JLR set for production acceleration

JAGUAR Land Rover is set to pump nearly £600 million of new investment into the West Midlands in moves that look set to create hundreds of fresh jobs as luxury car maker prepares for another huge acceleration in production.

More than £400 million is to be spent on expanding Jaguar production at the Castle Bromwich factory, while £150 million is being spent on doubling the size of JLR's advanced engineering and design centre at Whitley, near Coventry.

Over the next 12 months JLR says it will spend more than £3 billion on expanding its facilities in the UK and overseas and developing new cars, with 12 new products lined up.

Spectacular

It has also just unveiled its newest car in spectacular style, with a high-wire drive over the Royal Dock in London's Canary Wharf.

Like its aluminium bodied XE sister car, the XF will come with Ingenium engines made at the £500m Jaguar Land Rover engine plant at Wolverhampton. The combination of lightness and the super-efficient Ingeniums mean the XF will offer frugal fuel use of more than 70mpg.

With diesel engines set to roll off the production line imminently, and production of petrol engines due to start in about a year's time, it should mean more recruitment at the Wolverhampton engine plant which will eventually employ 1,500 people.

Grisly and strange old time sports

A LOOK at the sometimes gruesome sports that were enjoyed across the Black Country in days gone by will be led by a historian.

Chris Smith will take the audience at Dudley Archives on a journey through the history of traditional sports which have been enjoyed by local men and women. Among these will be cock fighting, rat baiting, bare knuckle boxing, even competitive walking.

The talk is being hosted by the Friends of Dudley archives and local history service who work to support Dudley borough archives, on Tipton Road.

The talk is at 7.30pm tonight (Thursday) and admission is free for members, or £2 non members. Call (01384) 812770 for more information.

Housing company has reached a milestone

A HOUSING company has renovated its 7,000th home in Dudley as it marks securing a new three year contract.

Lovell reached the milestone renovation for Dudley Council as part of the multi-million deal.

Knifeman sent to jail for terrorising couple

By Simon Stone

A KNIFEMAN who terrorised a couple in their Dudley home has been jailed for two years and five months.

The house where the victims lived had been burgled a year before Reece Baggott struck on October 27, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. The 23-year-old had not been responsible for the earlier break-in at the property in Merryfield Road but knew about it, the court was told.

Mr Harpreet Sandhu, prosecuting, explained: "The couple were unsettled by the burglary and were concerned when they saw the defendant and a younger man shout 'this is it' and start walking menacingly up the drive. The defendant was aggressive and gesticulating. He saw the couple at the window and shouted 'what are you looking at?'"

Baggott continued to threaten the pair when they came out to ask him to leave and left shouting 'remember, you have got to sleep in this house tonight'.

The man and relatives went to search for the offender and found him in a nearby street where there was a confrontation.

Frightening

The defendant went into a nearby address and emerged clutching a kitchen knife and warning 'I will slit you up', said Mr Sandhu.

Baggott, of Central Drive, Lower Gornal, was arrested soon afterwards but released on bail pending further inquiries. But in December he was seen again outside the couple's home drawing a finger across his throat whilst laughing and returned days later to mouth the words 'you're dead'. He was re-arrested on January 17.

The couple told the court they became prisoners in their own home.

Baggott, who had 13 previous convictions involving 24 offences, pleaded guilty to affray, possession of a knife and intimidating a witness and was jailed for 29 months.

Scuba club dive in to clean up reservoir



Dudley Dolphins Scarlett Morris, Cathy Kingcome, Laura Mason, Mandy Downing, Robert Meacham and Robin Turner

A SCUBA diving club is preparing to carry out an underwater litter pick to help safeguard nature at a beauty spot.

Members of Dudley Dolphin Sub-Aqua Club will be collecting debris from the bottom of Netherton Reservoir.

It is a site where they regularly dive and while active members will be gathering rubbish from up to 15 metres below the surface, friends and family will be doing the same along the banks of the reservoir.

The dive will be taking place at the Lodge Farm reservoir, off Highbridge Road, on April 26.

Club welfare officer Mandy Downing said: "We all use the water so we should all do our bit to maintain

it and keep it as nice as we can for as long as possible. The bits of rubbish are mainly round the edges, as the area is popular with the local community for fishing and walking. Unfortunately there is an inevitable amount of litter that comes with human visitors.

"It's mainly tins and bottles and cans but there is the odd shopping trolley too. We're hoping we'll be able to recycle what we pull out."

Mandy, aged 48, who works as an area manager for a greeting card company, only started diving a year ago and now dives every week.

The Dudley Dolphin club was established in 1964 and has around 40 members. See www.dudleydolphin.org.uk for details.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Huf's tribute to air crash victim

TRIBUTES have been paid to Tipton worker Martyn Matthews, who died in the Germanwings Flight 4U 9525 crash in the French Alps.

Ute Hoppe, director corporate communications at Huf Group, where the 50-year-old father-of-two worked, said: "Everybody in the Huf Group was deeply shocked when we were informed that our colleague Martyn Matthews died.

"We feel extremely sorry for his family and our colleagues at Huf UK who closely worked with Martyn for a long time."

Snooker ace event helped hospice

MORE than £600 was raised by a social club at a snooker exhibition with former world champion Steve Davis.

The snooker star was guest of Stourbridge Institute Social Club to officially reopen its refurbished snooker room. Around 140 people crammed into the room to see one of the sport's most famous names in action.

In total £612 was raised by the exhibition and a raffle for Stourbridge's Mary Stevens Hospice. Club chairman Ron Peplow invited the hospice head of fundraising Ruth Powell to receive the cheque.

Speaker's link to Charles Dickens

A GROUP celebrating the history of the Black Country will welcome a descendant of Charles Dickens.

The Black Country Society lecture is at the Black Country Living Museum on April 22 at 7.30pm, when the speaker is Lucinda Hawksley, great great granddaughter of Dickens, who has just completed a lecture tour of America. She will reveal how his books changed Victorian society. Admission is £2. See www.blackcountry-society.co.uk

Trio of rugby stars at club's May lunch

THERE will be a trio of rugby union stars at Stourbridge RFC's May lunch.

Former England and British Lions winger John Bentley will be master of ceremonies at the £90-a-head event on Friday, May 8.

Also speaking will be Wales record try scorer Shane Williams and former England captain Martin Corry.

The four-course event, being held in a marquee at the club's Stourton ground, will also feature comedian Andy White from Birmingham.

Shops are evacuated

A SUPERMARKET and surrounding shops in Stourbridge town centre were briefly evacuated following the discovery of a suspect package.

The Aldi store, in New Road, had to close for half an hour at 1.30pm on Tuesday, March 24. The package proved to be harmless.

Chance to wed on the internet at Priory Hall

A WEDDING venue in Dudley has become the first in the West Midlands to broadcast ceremonies online.

Couples can 'webcast' the service so people who may not be able to make it can watch via the internet.

Priory Hall, a council-owned venue, claims to be the only wedding location in the West Midlands offering the facility. Ceremonies at the Grade II listed building can also be recorded onto DVD.

Philip Tart, strategic director for transformation, said: "Couples getting married at Dudley Council's Priory Hall have a unique opportunity to share their big day with friends and family around the world.

"This is a great facility," he said. "So many people have friends and family who are too far away to attend their big day. By using the cameras at Priory Hall no one has to miss out."

There is a charge of £65 to broadcast a ceremony or have a DVD, or £75 for both.

Meanwhile, brides-to-be are invited to a wedding fair at Priory Hall next Thursday, April 9, from 5-7pm.

Future brides are encouraged to go along to the girls only event with their mothers, sisters, bridesmaids and friends and will receive a free glass of Bucks Fizz on arrival.

Visitors will be able to view a selection of 'once worn' bridal gowns, try them on and buy dresses at bargain prices. Confetti cones, order of ceremony leaflets, invitations and commemorative certificates will also be on display.

Hit the trail with walks from parks

TWO walks have been announced at parks as part of a two-week festival.

The free walks start from the activity hub buildings at Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge and Silver Jubilee Park in Colesey.

At each park there will be a six-mile walk on Saturday at 1pm, a seven-mile walk on April 13 at 11am, an eight-mile event on April 19 at 11am and a ten-miler on April at 26 at 11am.

Dudley Council's Deborah Harkins said the Dudley Trail attracted more than 2,000 walkers every year from across the region and beyond.

It costs £3 per person to join the 26 and 18 mile routes, £2.50 for the 12 and nine mile routes and £1.50 for the six miles, and 50p will be charged for entries on the day.

Good Friday's guest speaker

THE Good Friday guest speaker at Cradley Heath Baptist Church, off Corngreaves Road, will be Gordon Sumner at 11am. The service is followed by free hot cross buns.

Ex-publican was overcome by fumes



Fumes victim Martine Higginson

A FORMER publican died after being overwhelmed by fumes from a fire sparked by food left unattended on a cooker, a coroner has concluded.

Martine Higginson, 43, was found dead at her home in Wells Court, St John's Street, Netherton, on December 9.

Members of her family had been unable to contact her during the day and broke down a door at her flat to gain access.

Miss Higginson's sister, Peppa, kicked the door open and entered the flat using her mobile phone for light. "There was soot everywhere," she told the coroner.

Her sister had been found in the living room, paramedics were called but it was too late to save her.

Accident

A report by fire investigation officer Sean Tomkins said the evidence showed Miss Higginson's death had been 'a tragic accident'.

In a report, he said: "It seems she was preparing her evening meal and it is possible she fell asleep. Once awake she may have tried to escape the property before being overwhelmed by toxic fumes."

Miss Higginson's family said they were

concerned a smoke alarm in the hallway of the flat had failed to go off but when tested by fire investigators the alarm was found to be working. There was no evidence of an electrical fault at the property.

Senior Black Country coroner Mr Zafar Siddique said the medical cause of death was respiratory injuries and carbon monoxide poisoning. She was found to have no burns.

Mr Siddique gave a conclusion of accidental death at the end of the hearing. Miss Higginson ran the Yew Tree Pub in the town for a time.

College vows to offer support despite cuts

DUDLEY College bosses have vowed to support adult learners despite being forced to cut the number of course places available.

The college will have around 1,000 fewer places available to adult learners on certain courses after a £1.4 million drop in Government funding.

College bosses have said that up to 30 jobs may be at risk of redundancy due to the fewer numbers of places available for adult learners.

The cuts come from the Government's Skills Funding Agency for the courses the college provides.

Health and social care courses as well as early years training delivered in the workplace, like care homes and nurseries for employees, are among the courses affected. Others are giving skills to help people referred to the college from Job Centres and the prison service.

Principal Lowell Williams said the council had been forced to make 'difficult choices' but said it would continue to work to support adult learners.

Economy

He also hit out at the cuts in funding saying it was the local economy that would feel the impact of a potential skills shortage.

"I'm not sure the funding agency will see the true impact of its cuts as it has no direct contact with those adult learners we'll be forced to turn away in August because there's no money to support their learning," he said.

"Two years ago when funding was reduced for level 3 qualifications, an introduction of 24+ Advance Learning Loans offered students the choice to continue studying. Regrettably, a similar loan option hasn't been introduced during this budget reduction, even though the cuts will affect a larger number of learners.

"We are currently looking at ways to support adult learners through other funding options. We are advising students to consider 24+ loans if they are eligible and talking to employers about a different strategy to fund those individuals learning in the workplace."

A 30-day consultation period is now under way for staff informed of job losses. After this staff will be advised of their options once the funding cuts hit at the start of August.

Officials say the cuts come despite the college's financial health remaining 'strong' after its multi-million pound investment in Dudley's Learning Quarter.

Lorry was helped out of tight corner



Firefighters help guide the HGV out of the tight squeeze when wedged against a house in Brierley Hill

A LORRY was left in a tight spot when it became wedged against a house in the Black Country after a driver misjudged a manoeuvre. Firefighters were called to help free the HGV which was stuck up against the property in Brierley Hill.

They helped the driver remove the huge vehicle from Blythill Drive on Tuesday night (March 24).

The residents of the house were

thought to be out at the time and no-one was injured in the incident during the early evening.

West Midlands Fire Service spokesman Matthew Smith, said: "Fire crews from Brierley Hill were called to the scene by police at around 6.30pm on Tuesday.

Freeing

"Two engines and eight firefighters attended to assist the

lorry driver in freeing the vehicle," Mr Smith explained.

Sian Frederick, aged 23, a resident of Blythill Drive, said her boyfriend had witnessed the incident.

She said: "My boyfriend came from work and saw police, ambulances and fire engines outside the house. He said the lorry driver came down the street to turn around and seemed to misjudge his angle when reversing."

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It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

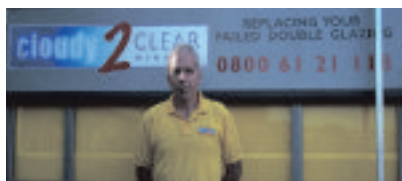
Managing Director Brian Stanley feels that it's all about service. "Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people

money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole."

Cloudy2Clear service Wolverhampton and the surrounding

area and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. "The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people



I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated."

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



Top Gear gone and nothing to tune in for

IT'S time to put the Clarkson debate to bed. If you punch a colleague at work, you can expect to get the sack, no matter how talented you might be. And as for those 'concerned members of the public' who made official complaints to police after reading about it in the newspaper, you really need to find something more productive to do with your time. Like writing poison-pen letters to Points of View. In green ink.

However, Clarkson's sacking does raise a serious issue. Since Top Gear has been dropped, there has been nothing at all on mainstream television which I have any desire to watch. Not a thing.

OK, I still watch the news. And there are some decent repeats on some of the more obscure digital channels – mainly Top Gear now you mention it. And if they ever get round to bringing back The Apprentice, I will probably watch that. Soap operas, period dramas, singing and dancing contests, sorry it's just moving wallpaper. And then on Saturday night Channel 4 came up with what is surely one of the most yawn-inspiring ideas yet, a political drama about the talks leading up to the formation of the present coalition government. What next? Live paint drying?

Of course, people have different tastes, and just because I don't enjoy those programmes does not mean that other people should be denied the chance to watch them. But given that the BBC makes so much fuss about how it caters for the broadest possible audience, isn't something wrong that a pretty average Joe like myself can't find a single programme to watch?

Given that the broadcasters are already excluding certain sections of the population, what exactly is the licence fee for?

□□□□□

HERE is something I doubt we will be hearing much about from any of the major politicians over the next few weeks. Over the course of the past three years the Department of Food and Rural Affairs has spent a pretty tasty £420,000 of taxpayers' money killing 88 ducks because their feathers were the wrong colour.

Not that this is a purely coalition extermination programme it should be stressed. The decision to begin exterminating American ruddy ducks actually began in 2003, and between 2006 and 2011 successive administrations managed to wipe out 4,400 of these birds, which are said to threaten the existence of the European white-headed duck. It seems that governments of all colours are united that all ducks in Europe should be the same colour.

It seems that our feathered friends seem to rear their differently coloured heads every time there is an election on. Last time it was duckhouses, this time it's duck eradication programmes.



Concentrating – Jordan Edwards, 18, from Willenhall



Eyes down at the League of Legends challenge



Competing – 17 year old Callum Fellows

Game on! Students are in league of own

In training for months, these college teams are in an epic battle for dominance, as JORDAN HARRIS explains

IT'S an epic battle for dominance. A war to be crowned the best of the best.

No, it's not the latest Call of Duty release, but a bid by students in Wolverhampton to triumph in the Student Gaming Championship.

They have been in training for months, honing their skills ready to unleash on those who dare to challenge them in the championship and have already passed the first hurdle, beating their initial rivals in a 70-minute battle of wits and skill.

Strategic

As part of the challenge, a total of 10 students, who are studying for Level 2 and 3 qualifications in games design at the City of Wolverhampton College's Paget Road campus, make up two teams and battle it out against competitors from schools, colleges and universities across the country in a fast-paced game of League of Legends.

The teams go head-to-head in a multi-player online battle arena and have to combine strategic thinking skills and lightning reflexes with co-ordinated play in small-scale skirmishes and intense battles as they seek to destroy their enemies' nexus before their own is destroyed.

League of Legends is accredited with being the largest and most popular online game with more than 15 million players worldwide and around 1.4 million players logging in every day.

The City of Wolverhampton College team



Keeping a close eye on game progress – Matthew Cullwick, 17

beat their first foes in a 70-minute epic.

Adam Cross, lecturer in computer games development at the college said: "Taking part in this kind of event takes communication and team work to a different level as players will have to react quickly and adapt as a team to be successful."

"The students are really excited to be taking part and, in preparation, have been devising strategies and organising team building activities and practice sessions to give them the best chance of success on the day."

"Our first match was a close game but I think the practice we had gave us the advantage. We are waiting to hear about the date of the next fixture."

"Now that the first game is done, the team is planning to put in some more practise as we expect the competition to get more challenging."

Applied science student Callum Fellows says the formation of this team has given him a chance to socialise with like minded people while having fun.

He said: "The game is one of the best that is currently out there and it is great fun to watch these guys play against teams from around the country."

"The skills you can get from gaming are applicable in other fields of life, the team work aspect and the ability to analyse decisions you have made with others during a game, go back and look at them again and see where you went wrong."

Game design student Jordan Edwards, 18, from Willenhall, said the competition directly benefits his studies.

He said: "League of Legends is an absolutely huge game that is growing all the time."

"For someone who studies the making of games and the work behind them, it is amazing to see what the developers have done."

"We have to work on the technical side of things all the time, as well as creating stories, scenarios and basically this whole world our game will live inside, so studying something which has had this much success is a real lesson."

Social

Outside of the work-related benefits, Mr Cross believes the tournament is an opportunity for the group to socialise and make new friends.

During a practice session ahead of their first competitive match, the team banter with each other over character choices, previous bad games and skill levels.

He said: "There is a social level to all of this that people sometimes don't understand."

"When the team is competing against others or even one another, they are cracking jokes, making friends and socialising."

"Sometimes the focus gaming students have on their studies, which also happen to be their favourite hobby, can be mistaken for a communicational issue."

"This team shows we have a strong community here."

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Outdated administrative boundaries

THE proposals for a proposed Black Country & Birmingham Combined Authority are the latest in a long line of Westminster and Whitehall driven ideas geared to giving the impression of devolving powers while they continue unchanged in their own way – taking credit when things go right and pointing the blame at the local when they go wrong.

There is no real drive by Westminster and Whitehall to give up powers and ultimate control over the local. Despite real devolution outside England we have had no change in West-

minster. The funding which might be available to a Black Country and Birmingham Authority would be minuscule compared to the level of reductions in public expenditure since 2010. The level and allocation of funds would be subject to the agreement of Westminster and Whitehall. The majority of our local elected representatives would have even less say and influence on priorities than they do at present.

A West Midlands Combined Authority based on the Black Country and Birmingham authorities with or without Solihull and Coventry based on the

long redundant Metropolitan County boundary fails to connect the very real economic and social links between the metropolitan and shire areas.

We need a strategy which breaks out of the straitjacket of outdated administrative boundaries and thinking.

We need powers and resources devolved to new directly accountable authorities at a more local level than we have at present and a West Midlands which would require met and shire interests to work together to address their shared interests.

G MORRAN, Dudley

MPs work hard for the people

ALMOST everything I read in the press about MPs is critical. They are often portrayed as money-grabbing and self-interested but in my experience they work hard for their local communities and constituents.

In my case, I had problems with a mobile phone company. I had tried to resolve it for months. The company ignored all my calls and letters, even when I tried to report the issues to the chief executive. The regulator was of no use and I was getting increasingly frustrated and concerned.

I was not sure if he could help, but I contacted my MP Chris Kelly. He immediately took the matter up with the company, and got a response from them, something I had been completely unable to do.

The whole matter was resolved in my favour. We should be pleased that we have such outstanding people to represent and help us.

B KEMP
Kingswinford

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

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expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Is it now time to say enough is enough?

NOT too long ago this nation ruled the waves, we had the finest armed forces, we could defend ourselves, we were the envy of the world, we had a mining industry, we had steel plants, we had the best police, the NHS was second to none, education was the best, we had a car industry, our utilities were publicly owned as were the railways, most people had employment and it was even easy to change jobs.

Now we do not have a navy to talk about, our armed forces would not fill Wembley stadium, there is no mining industry, no steel plants, police forces with ever decreasing staff, our NHS is in crisis, our education system is in question, no car industry of our own, the utility companies now rake in massive profits and we see no benefits, the railways are a disgrace, the job situation offers are one of zero hours and below the minimum wage in most cases.

After losing all of these the banks brought about a crisis not of our making, they have not been punished but instead they decide to make us, the innocents, suffer. Is it not now time to tell politicians enough is enough?

To quote Abraham Lincoln "You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time."

P LOWE, Brierley Hill

Why Laurel & Hardy not on TV?

HERE'S a question. How come we never see Laurel & Hardy on TV?

There will be folk, who'll say, 'they were funny in your childhood but they wouldn't appeal to today's seven-year-olds'.

I wouldn't expect today's seven-year-olds to bop around to Roy Orbison, Del Shannon or the Beatles, but these two comedy greats emerged from the silent era from which the visual art is what movies were built on.

Why can't a place be found for some of these generally, 20 minute 'shorts, their universal appeal, would be a joy to children of all ages.

One last more topical point. I believe 'the boys' along with Chico Marx appeared at Dudley's Hippodrome. How sad will it be, if it goes the wrong way, when our seven-year-old is now 17 and after reading an article about Dudley's ever decreasing past asks, "Dad, what was the Hippodrome?"

STEVE FORD
Kingswinford

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Ironbridge undertaker Bill Williams with the tramcar building in 1974



One of the trams is lifted clear



The trams are part of the Coalbrookdale property on the right

Coffin shop tramcars have new lease of life at Black Country museum

IT'S a tram-endous story with a happy ending. When two Wolverhampton trams were taken out of service in the 1920s they were snapped up and brought to the Ironbridge Gorge to be incorporated into a house which stood for many years.

And when the time came in 1976 to demolish that house in Coalbrookdale, the trams were both salvaged to be used as museum pieces.

One of them was restored to be run on tracks taking visitors around the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley, where it remains an exhibit today and will run again soon.

The property mentioned had once been the home of Bill Williams.

Dave Bentley of Admaston whose wife is

MEMORY LANE

Report by Toby Neal

related to the Williams family, said: "Mrs Williams was my mother-in-law's auntie. Bill Williams was the undertaker down the bottom of Ironbridge. The trams were sent to the Black Country Museum and done up," he said.

Crane

And Dave was able to give the date that the trams were removed – June 23, 1976.

The Shropshire Star reported on that day: "Overhead wires had to be taken down in Coalbrookdale today to allow a massive lifting operation to get under way. The telephone wire was taken down so that a mobile crane could lift two old trams which have been used as an undertaker's home

and coffin shop since 1925. The 26ft long trams – which originally weighed about 13 tons each – were being lifted on to two low loaders for transport to the Black Country Museum storage building at Pensnett trading estate. There they will be made into a single machine to run on tracks at the museum site in Dudley.

"The trams were being removed from Mr Bill Williams' premises. His father-in-law, Mr Edwin Brown, bought them when they went out of service after 20 years' use, and built a house using them as gable ends. Mr Williams later used the building as a coffin shop."

Laura Wakelin of the Black Country Living Museum added: "Both tramcars were used as public trams on the Penn Fields route, Wolverhampton, during the few years preceding the First World War.

"Once withdrawn from service they were sold to Mr Edwin Brown of Ironbridge and

eventually used to form part of his undertaker's home and coffin shop in 1925.

"Both trams came to the museum in 1976. Tram 49 was subsequently restored with a lot of funding from the Science Museum, London. Tram 49 is on display in the museum's Albion Tram Depot which is open to the public on every museum opening day.

"Tram 49 has run on the museum's tram tracks and it will continue to do so as soon as some necessary essential maintenance has been carried out on the tracks.

"Unfortunately upon arriving at the museum tram 47 was in a state of disrepair and the decision was taken that it would be more useful to sacrifice it for spares."

It is not the only time the museum has received trams in this way. In 1984 two old trams which were used as part of a bungalow in County Lane, Codsall Wood, were donated to the museum.



Tram 49 – restored and gleaming at the museum

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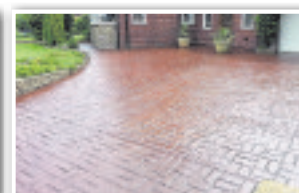
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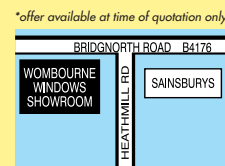
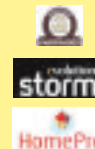
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Debbie leading war on cancer with TV campaign

A CANCER survivor from Halesowen who is fighting a second battle with the disease is fronting a TV campaign.

Debbie Ringham, aged 38, is leading the nationwide TV and poster campaign calling on women to join forces at Cancer Research UK's Race for Life.

In the advert, Debbie leads an army of women against cancer whilst wearing a specially designed pink head-dress.

"By standing together in the bid to beat cancer, we can fight back against this devastating disease," she said.

Debbie, who works for the charity at the University of Birmingham as a research engagement manager, was first diagnosed with thyroid cancer at the age of 24.

Successful treatment, which involved surgery followed by radioactive iodine to destroy any leftover cancer cells, led to her joining the charity.

Then, in January of last year, Debbie discovered she had breast cancer and, in June, found out it had spread to her liver.

Debbie said: "I deal with cancer every day in my work but it was still a huge shock to be told I had the disease a second time.

Determined

"Even though I was going through treatment I was determined to complete the first Race for Life Pretty Muddy event in Birmingham last year.

"It felt like I was getting my own back on cancer, which is why I was thrilled to then be asked to take part in the TV advert. It really captures the fighting spirit behind the thousands of women who sign up each year."

As well as the national television campaign, Debbie can be seen on posters and billboards across the UK



Debbie Ringham is calling on women to form a pink army at Race for Life events

as part of the drive to recruit around 530,000 women to join in with the Race for Life in 2015.

Debbie was diagnosed with breast cancer after finding a lump and had 21 weeks of chemotherapy followed by surgery. But last summer she suffered a further setback when doctors discovered the cancer had spread to her liver.

"I'd been feeling pretty positive until that point," said Debbie. "But hearing that the cancer had spread was the worst news. When I went back to see my doctor again, I was reassured

there are different treatments to try and keep the cancer under control."

She contributed to research directly by donating blood and breast tissue, and also gives tours of the charity's Birmingham facility. Debbie is now back at work full-time and taking hormone therapy, shrinking the secondary tumour.

She is planning to take part in Race for Life Pretty Muddy event at Cofon Park, Longbridge, on July 17. Enter at www.raceforlife.org or call 0300 123 0770.

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Secretary is looking for quiz teams

Grange (E) Guild

GRANGE guild held their annual AGM at Grange Court, Stourbridge on February 3, with chairman Hazel Smith welcoming all members along with three new members and three guests.

She read the minutes from last year's AGM which were accepted and signed. The committee agreed to serve for another 12 months but it was stressed that another two volunteers were needed to assist them.

Treasurer Jill Attwood presented an up-to-date financial report. Secretary Jean Williams announced she was hoping to enter two teams into the Federation quiz on June 1. Members were asked if they would like to enter items into a Federation craft display being held at the Federation AGM at Stourbridge Town Hall on April 15.

Marlene O'Hanlon reported a full diary of speakers for 2015. The diary has also been filled for 2016. The copper collection for Lye Disabled was still going well and the food bank was well supported with items coming in on a regular basis.

Following the AGM members enjoyed a fish and chip supper.

The next meeting will be held at Grange Court, Prescott Road, Stourbridge on April 7 with a group of ladies calling themselves The Bantock Bodgers who do rag rugging.

The guild is still recruiting new members. Any ladies wishing to visit can call secretary Jean Williams on 01384 832439.

Setting table for birthday bash



Sedgley Evening Guild craft group are busy making table decorations for their forthcoming 60th anniversary dinner. It takes place on Monday, April 20.

Sedgley Evening Townswomen

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progression to 1824 when Cadbury's introduced the very first selection in a box called Milk Tray and Fry's made the first cream chocolate bar.

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Chairman Mary Jones reminded members the

speaker on April 10 will be Lisa Williams, the Lifestyle editor at the Express & Star and that there would be a bring & buy stall.

A coach outing was being planned to Moreton in the Marsh and Bourton on the Water for members and their friends

Meetings are held the second Friday in the month at noon for 12.30pm. Visitors receive a warm welcome and can visit three times before deciding to join. Call the secretary on 01902 372984.

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Margot with an apprentice at Stourbridge College



An economic recovery for all

There is no doubt that the economy has turned the corner. After the worst recession in modern times wages are rising again and employment is at record levels. The massive debt, built up under the last government, is coming down and the budget deficit has been halved.

The budget raised the tax-free personal allowance and the 40p tax threshold. And there was help for savers who have been hit by very low interest rates. Young people saving towards their first home can take out a Help to Buy ISA, in to which the government puts in £50.00 for every £200 saved, up to a maximum of £3000. And all savers can benefit from the new basic rate tax free allowance of £1000.

The long-term economic plan is working, but we need to keep working through it to secure a better future. That is why I need your help at the election on May 7th.

Our commitment to the NHS

Margot has campaigned hard to improve health and care in Stourbridge. Margot is in constant communication with doctors, nurses, care home staff and local NHS management on behalf of constituents.

The Conservative Party have committed to increasing expenditure on the NHS after the election. Despite having to make cuts in public spending, the Government has invested an additional £12.7 billion in to the NHS since 2010.

Mixed sex wards are no longer, there are 23,000 more doctors and nurses (437 more in Dudley alone) and hospital infections have nearly halved. Margot warned people not to be taken in by Labour's talk on the NHS. She said "Labour runs the NHS in Wales where results are very poor compared to the rest of England, the NHS budget in Wales has been cut by 8% and A&E targets haven't been met since 2009".

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Conservatives



Waiting to see you - Igglepiggle and friends in the forest

COMPETITION

Igglepiggle is just the ticket for youngsters

THE summer classic for children, In The Night Garden Live, will be delighting youngsters and their parents at Birmingham's Canon Hill Park from July 11-25, as part of a UK tour.

Nine out of 10 parents give the staged event of the BAFTA award-winning CBeebies children's TV show five out of five stars, according to audience surveys and parents' reviews on NightGardenLive.com.

And you could be at this amazing musical theatre experience for all the family. The organisers have teamed up with the Chronicle series to offer readers the chance to win three Meet the Cast and Characters family tickets and three runner-up show-only family tickets (Family ticket is for four people, minimum one adult).

Children's favourite CBeebies' stars,

Igglepiggle, Upsy Daisy, Makka Pakka and friends, are all brought beautifully to life on stage using full-size costumes, magical puppets, enchanting music and breathtaking projections.

The show takes place in its own all-weather, purpose-built inflatable showdome with many family-friendly facilities. This site-specific structure is a huge hit with children and parents and its immersive theatrical experience makes audiences feel they are actually entering the magical world of the TV show In The Night Garden.

Andrew Collier, Creative Director of Minor Entertainment said: "Parents tell us that children as young as a few months old engage with the live show, and the looks on the faces of the children and parents in the audiences are absolutely amazing."

Greetings from Igglepiggle



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What colour is Igglepiggle's blanket?
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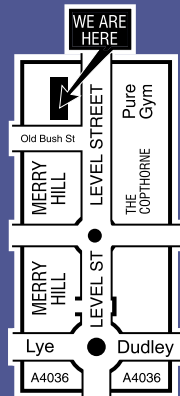
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Longleat Safari and Adventure Park

Two days departing June 27



Longleat Safari and Adventure Park is home to the 7th Marquess of Bath and includes entrance to over 20 attractions. The highlight of the day has to be the Safari Park, which was the first drive-through park outside Africa. Here visitors will find fascinating animals including lions, tigers, rhinos and giraffes, and in the East African reserve, there is the chance to spy on zebras, and walk amongst ring tailed lemurs and wallabies.

Other popular attractions within Longleat include the Jungle Cruise, that sails across the lake towards Gorilla Island, and the Jungle Express Railway. There is also the chance to hand feed lorikeets and walk through a meerkat enclosure as well as the opportunity to see the world's fastest land animal, the cheetah.

INFO

- Return coach travel
- Overnight half-board accommodation
- Day ticket to Longleat Safari and Adventure Park
- Visit to Bath
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

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Pick of the week



PRICE FROM

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Glorious Goodwood

Two days departing August 1



PRICE FROM

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- Overnight half-board accommodation
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- Visit to Windsor
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

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Sinatra The Man and his Music at the London Palladium

Two days departing August 8



PRICE FROM

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- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Omega Holidays (ABTA V4782)

London Summer Days

Five days departing August 17



PRICE FROM

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- Return coach travel
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- Excursion to Windsor
- Optional excursion to Hampton Court Palace and Richmond (£17 extra per person)
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- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Omega Holidays (ABTA V4782)

The Edinburgh Military Tattoo, Rail and Steam

Four days departing August 21



PRICE FROM

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Secret Gardens of the Lake District

Four days departing June 26



PRICE FROM

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- Entrance to Brantwood House and gardens
- Entrance to the gardens at Levens Hall
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Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Afternoon Tea at the Houses of Parliament

Four days departing
June 5, August 14 and September 18



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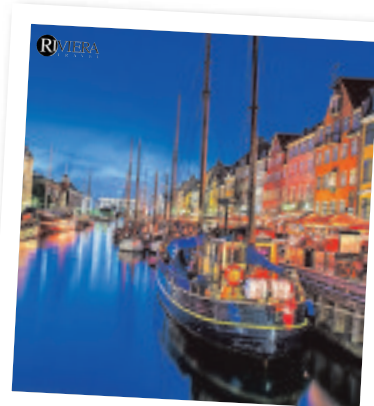


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- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Riviera Travel (ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430)



July festival to honour strikers

A FESTIVAL will celebrate a group of Black Country women's ground-breaking industrial victory.

The event in Cradley Heath will bring to life the victory of the women chainmakers of Cradley Heath through drama, dance, poetry and performance.

The 1910 Women Chainmakers' strike, led by Mary Macarthur and supported by the women of Cradley Heath, was pivotal in labour history. Hundreds of low-paid women won the dispute, which laid the foundations for today's national minimum wage.

A statue of the campaigner now stands in Mary Macarthur Gardens in the town.

The event will take place in Cradley Heath High Street on Sunday, July 12, from 11am to 6pm.

New era for health as urgent care centre opens at hospital

A NEW urgent care centre was set to officially opens its doors at Russells Halls Hospital in Dudley this week.

The facility was opening yesterday (Wednesday), replacing the walk-in centre at Holly Hall and marking the start of a new era for healthcare in the borough.

It has been designed to take the pressure off the busy A&E and Dr Joanne Taylor, medical service head for the emergency department, said: "The urgent care centre will be a single place for patients with urgent or emergency

medical needs to be seen and treated by the most appropriate professional."

The urgent care centre has four consulting rooms and will treat patients with minor illnesses and injuries that need urgent attention such as minor burns and bites, fever and raised temperatures, mild breathing difficulties and cuts and scrapes.

It has been operating on a trial basis between 10am and 10pm for the past month. During that time, doctors and nurses have seen on average 40 to 50 patients a day. But they expect the number to increase to more than 100 when

the centre is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Dr Nabell Malik, from Malling Health, which has been awarded a five-year £18million contract, said: "We're working closely with the emergency department to make sure patients are seen in the right place.

"It's all about ensuring patients get the appropriate treatment."

Plans to close the walk-in centre have proved unpopular. More than 3,000 people responded to a consultation on the closure of the walk-in centre, while hundreds of people signed a petition calling for it to remain open.

Easter events at attraction

FUN activities will be taking place at a Shropshire beauty spot during the Easter school holidays. Severn Valley Country Park, near Bridgnorth, is holding a host of events daily from 11am to 5pm.

A trail has been laid by the park rangers for youngsters to see if they can find the characters from The Snow Queen. Maps cost £2. On April 8 children can make clay collages to decorate Ethelfleda's well.

There will also be a geocache Easter egg hunts on April 10. Working in teams, visitors will be able to use a handheld GPS unit to navigate around the park to search for treasure chests. There are two sessions.

Events at the park near Alveley are £3.50 per child. Call 01746 781 192.

Acting up! Drama student Lewis takes starring role



Halesowen College drama student Lewis Hughes is acting in the production

A DRAMA student is taking a starring role in a new film highlighting the dangers of sexual exploitation.

The film called Anybody's Child had its official red carpet premiere at the Showcase Cinema, Dudley.

Halesowen College drama student Lewis Hughes is acting in the production which is a educational film informing families and young people of the signs of sexual exploitation.

It has been sent to every school in the UK and was produced by ChatBack Productions.

The film follows the character of 14-year-old Charlie Owen who gets exploited by her older boyfriend Dan Harris, played by Lewis.

Lewis said: "I loved every second of mak-

ing the film but portraying the character of Dan was terrifying. I hated the character and it opened by eyes.

"I'm sure people who have watched the film with also hate Dan as that is the only way people will notice the signs and dangers of sexual exploitation, so people can do something about it.

Dream

"My dream outside this project is to bring families together so parents and siblings will notice the warning signs at the beginning and prevent the hurt and danger before it even starts."

Kurt Cook, Drama Lecturer at Halesowen College, said: "Lewis is studying A level drama at College and it is great to see him putting his skills to the test."

HSBC is to relocate 1,000 jobs to Brum

INTERNATIONAL banking giant HSBC is moving 1,000 jobs from London to Birmingham as its sets up the new head office for its UK banking business.

The world's second largest bank is taking a 250-year lease on a new 210,000 sq ft office block that will be built as part of the £400 million Arena Central development in the city centre. The legal documents are due to be signed in the next few days with work starting on the site in June.

HSBC says it will start moving jobs from its base in Canary Wharf to Birmingham in 2017.

The operation being moved to the West Midlands is its 'ring-fenced' British retail and commercial banking business.

New regulations that come into force in 2019 mean all the UK's big banks have to split their ordinary banking operations from their riskier investment banking, to protect taxpayers from having to bail out the banks again.

Circus fun at Webbs

THE circus will be rolling into town next week.

The big top will be at Webbs Garden Centre in Kidderminster Road South, West Hagley.

A new show featuring aerial acrobatics, juggling feats and clown capers will run from April 7 to 12. There will be daily shows at 10.30am, 1pm and 3pm.

Webbs chairman, Ed Webb said: "It's an hour long and children will love it."

Tickets are £6 and can be booked at www.webbs.co.uk

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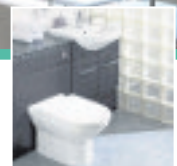
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Goal should be to achieve as an MP



DANIEL WAINWRIGHT
Political Editor

IT won't be Paxo who stuffs the Tories in the General Election – it will be their own candidates and MPs.

David Cameron came across as irritable while Jeremy Paxman gave him a roasting in the first of the televised leaders' interviews. But the polls continue to suggest he's something of an asset to the Conservatives. That is more than can be said for Afzal Amin, who has resigned as candidate for Dudley North after meeting with the English Defence League and discussing the 'fantasy' of arranging a march, then calling it off.

His emergency replacement, Les Jones, was chosen at a hastily-convened meeting of the constituency association. The former council leader was the only name anyone wanted.

March

Anne Millward, also a former council leader as well as chairman of the Conservative association in Dudley North, said she did not want a candidate from outside 'foisted' on the party.

The only hope the Tories have of making up their lost ground is to have someone who knows everything there is know about the patch.

Afzal Amin had two years to get to know it. And he was from Smethwick originally anyway, not a million miles away. He maintained his actions in meeting with the EDL were all in the best interests of people in Dudley.

But after the last march cost hundreds of thousands in policing and



Afzal Amin – resigned

stirred up a lot of anger and resentment it is hard to see how any attempt to work with the far right group could have been in the interests of anyone bar the individual candidate.

The retiring Tory MP Aidan Burley has also not helped his party hold on to Cannock Chase by taking a swipe at his 'rude' constituents either.

There is an issue that all parties must address, but after this week it is especially urgent for the Tories, and that is the reason their candidates are standing at all. No-one could have expected that Afzal Amin would do something like that. But it looks as though he was prepared to do a deal to become an MP.

Aidan Burley, meanwhile, says that when he campaigned in 2010 he had 'not expected to win the seat'.

This was probably just very



Aidan Burley – retiring

self-deprecating of him. Even so, it did make me think about others standing this time around.

If a candidate is not expecting to win then why are they are going for it in the first place?

If they are just there for the sake of the party saving face and having a name on the ballot paper it lets down the people who lend it their votes.

There will be cases of candidates parachuted into constituencies with little or no knowledge of the area.

Some work hard to get to know those constituencies and become adopted as locals. Others see their voters as little more than a spring-board to Westminster.

The goal for them must be to achieve something in Parliament. Getting into Parliament is not and must never be the goal in itself.

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Never mind quantity, quality was great

Catfish and the Bottlemen, The Institute, Birmingham.

THE set was short and sweet at 50 minutes from these rising stars from North Wales (or maybe that should be short and sweat, the way the venue was filled to capacity) but one can forgive the brevity with just one album under their belt.

However, that debut *The Balcony* has been consistently winning over converts to the Llandudno quartet

since its release last autumn. Every track, from this gig's opener *Rango* to the final double salvo of *Cocoon* and an epic, blistering version of *Tyrants*, was treated like a greatest hit by an enthusiastic crowd.

Singer Van McCann seemed genuinely delighted to hear his lyrics sung back at him and pointed out that they have played every room at the Dighbeth venue, finally making the main hall.

Their soaring melodic songs about

teenagers fuelled by hormones and booze seem to have wide appeal judging by the age range at the Brum gig. Sadly, they may never play such a small venue again as they look destined for the arenas, provided they can adequately follow up *The Balcony*. Judging by this early contender for West Midlands gig of the year, the frantic four with the odd name are up to the task.

Leon Burakowski

Distinctive voice has still got it

Joan Armatrading
Town Hall, Birmingham

AFTER more than 40 years of gigging around the world one of the Second City's most famous daughters was back on her home patch.

The concert was a potted history of her career with a video screen, used throughout her singing but mainly there to give her a break and tell the audience about her achievements and all the famous people she has encountered.

Armatrading's distinctive, deep and mournful voice has lost none of its allure, power or emotion. You have to give it to her, the veteran singer did a 90-minute set straight through.

Apart from having a great voice and producing some of the most memorable songs of more than one generation Armatrading is a fantastic guitarist.

She gave the audience what they wanted, running through her catalogue of hits right from the first album. Armatrading is so relaxed on stage and had the audience in the palm of her hands.

Danny Farragher

REVIEWS



A scene from *A View From the Bridge* on a welcome return to the Grand Theatre

Gripping drama was played with complete conviction

A View From The Bridge, Grand Theatre

TOURING Consortium Theatre, made a welcome return to the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, with a stunning production of Arthur Miller's gripping drama.

Those who have yet to experience Miller's hard-hitting storylines should not be fooled into thinking that the title of the play refers to the scene of affluence associated with Manhattan as seen from the Brooklyn Bridge.

This is a tragic snapshot of the hardship endured by many New Yorkers who resided in the Red Hook area of the city during the 1950s, when employment for the lucky

few meant working on the docks under back-breaking conditions.

Eddie Carbone, is a longshoreman who struggles to keep his wife Beatrice and orphaned niece, Catherine, while also taking on the responsibility of two cousins from his spouse's Italian family who are, we learn, illegal immigrants.

Jonathan Guy Lewis took on the pivotal role of Eddie Carbone with complete conviction, offering a dark, menacing portrayal with depth of character. Teresa Banham as Beatrice perfectly conveyed the increasing concern and terror.

Alison Norton

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Golf club set for dancing fundraiser

A GOLF club near Dudley is hosting fundraising dance and exercise classes for charity.

Margaret Baker, who runs Himley Hall Golf Club with her husband Desmond, is holding weekly dance and exercise sessions at Crystal Dance Studios in Cleveland Street, Dudley, in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

Mrs Baker is a student at the dance studio and knows Mark and Olga Elsbury, the couple who run it, and have lent the facility to the golf club for the charity activities.

As well as the weekly classes, there will also be a football match at the Dell Stadium in Dudley on August 2 between dancers and golfers, while on August 8 there will be a concert at the golf club and fundraisers will be scaling Ben Nevis in Scotland on August 14.

Mrs Baker said she had chosen Breakthrough Breast Cancer because she had lost friends and relatives to the disease. She added over the last three weeks £300 had been raised by the fundraising sessions.

Two years ago, the golf club raised £4,000 for the fight against children's cancer by holding similar events.



Organiser Margaret Baker, with, front, Nicky Horne and, centre, Ella Harrison, aged nine, from Tipton

Pay back order on £46,000 owed by money launderer

A WOMAN who helped hide 'dirty money' accrued by her daughter's corrupt boyfriend has been ordered to pay back £46,000 – a decade after being convicted of money laundering.

Sharon Millard was jailed for six months in 2005 after a West Midlands Police investigation showed she had processed £97,537 through her bank accounts.

Police said a proceeds of crime order at the time had forced her to hand over almost £51,000. But after pleading poverty the remaining £46,000 was left on file.

Officers from the force's Economic Crime Unit reopened the case last year and found the 59-year-old had paid off the mortgage on her home and was sitting on tens of thousands of pounds in equity.

Debt

Millard, of Comber Drive, Pensnett, was served with a court order restricting her financial dealings. And at Wolverhampton Crown Court earlier this month she was ordered to repay the outstanding amount or go back behind bars for another 18 months.

DC Yvonne Barwani, said: If she doesn't pay up then she will be jailed – but even if that happens the debt stays with her and we'll continue pursuing her for the money.

Proceeds from POCA confiscations are collected by central government with a percentage returned to the force for spending on crime fighting priorities and crime prevention initiatives.

Appeal for surveyor on restoration of garden

VOLUNTEERS working to restore a Grade I listed walled garden in the grounds of a Halesowen park want to find a surveyor to help with their plans.

The walled garden at The Leasowes is being painstakingly restored by a group of volunteers who have begun work to return it to its former glory.

The gardens had been used by horticultural students at Stourbridge College until the site closed and was acquired by the Halesowen Abbey Trust.

Over recent months the group members have set to work clearing the near two acres gardens which had fallen into disrepair.

Members have employed an architect to come up with designs for how a rejuvenated garden would look.

They want to replace modern greenhouses, which are showing signs of wear and tear, with a traditional Victorian style building.

Rubble

Mobile buildings would also be removed from the site as part of the project which will cost up to £500,000 to complete.

In their place there would be space to create an orchard and a wild flower meadow.

Tons of rubble will need to be moved from the gardens over the coming weeks including the buildings if the group gains permission.

Trust spokesman Mick Freer says this has focused thoughts on the layout of the garden. He is appealing

By Andrew Turton

for a surveyor to come on board to help the team map the site out and work with the architect.

The volunteers are also appealing for any company which specialises in removing rubble for help.

"The project is moving on really well," he said. "This will become a major attraction park which people will come to see."

"We already have a wonderful architect on board. We need to survey the land and wanted to see if a surveyor will come and help us."

Other plans are in the pipeline to create a series of allotments which are available to members of the community. The scheme involves restoring the garden to its 19th century glory. It was added to the mansion in 1776 to feed the family and servants of the owner Edward Horne.

The park is of historic significance because of the landscaping carried out by the poet William Shenstone from 1743 until his death in 1763. To help email mick.freer@leasoweswalledgarden.co.uk

Cashpot for schools

TWO schools in Wyre Forest will receive a slice of a £367million Government cashpot to carry out improvements to their building. The money has been awarded to Baxter College in Kidderminster and Lickhill Primary School in Stourport.

Work will be carried out to replace the roof and windows at Baxter College and windows will also be replaced at Lickhill Primary.



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John Lawson's circus returns to Webbs, West Hagley this Easter with a new show.

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Tennis club takes advantage of auction to snap up iconic dress

A MYSTERY buyer who snapped up the white tennis dress worn in the iconic Athena tennis girl poster for more than £15,000 has been revealed.

Model Fiona Walker, from Stourbridge, was the young lady in the saucy shot depicting a player cheekily hitching up her skirt.

And now it has emerged the dress worn in the well-known image was purchased by the museum at Wimbledon at auction last year.

The All-England Tennis Club paid £15,500 last July for both the dress and racket made famous in the 1970s poster, but at the time chose to keep its identity a secret.

But the home of tennis, at SW19, has now unveiled the handmade dress as an exhibit and invited Carol Knotts, who made the outfit all those years ago, along as a guest of honour.

Officials at the club were forced to apologise recently after using the image to advertise its powerful posters event at Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum.

It prompted a volley of criticism and claims of sexism on social media after the club tweeted a photo of the iconic poster.

Thrilled

Although the tweet was taken down, officials said the image would still form part of the exhibition. Carol, who lives in Gloucestershire and is a personal injury and clinical negligence barrister, said she was thrilled the club purchased the dress.

"It could have gone to anyone, private collectors, celebrities, who knows?" she said.

"But I am so pleased Wimbledon considered it important enough to feature in their museum so it can be enjoyed by everyone."

As a teenager, Carol played tennis at her local club in Stourbridge and made the dress from a pattern.

One day her friend Fiona asked to borrow the dress and the racket for a photo shoot with then-boyfriend Martin Elliott.

Report by Lee Watton

Mr Elliott, who died in 2010, sold the image rights to Athena and the poster went on to sell more than two million copies. Carol said before last year's auction, held at Fieldings Auctioneers, in Stourbridge, she had the dress tucked away in a cupboard at her home.

"When I first thought about selling it a few years ago I did think about offering it to the Wimbledon museum but I really didn't think they would be interested."

"I can't quite believe that the dress I used to wear to play tennis in will now be part of the Wimbledon Museum collection. It's incredible."

The dress was sold on the day of the Wimbledon ladies' singles final last July between Petra Kvitová and Eugénie Bouchard, and at the time was expected to make between £1,000 and £2,000.

But bids flooded in for the piece of poster history – including one as far away as New Zealand.

Bidders battled it out in person, over the phone and on the internet as they tried to secure the dress.

Carol was called to the bar in 1996. Fiona Walker, from Oldswinford, was an 18-year-old art student when she posed for the photo in 1976 at Edgbaston Tennis Club.

Mrs Walker refused to comment on the recent furore surrounding the image, while some Twitter users said they did not believe the image was controversial.



Fiona Walker, the woman in the famous tennis Athena poster



Poster girl Fiona, of Stourbridge, with a copy of the iconic image

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Mind Games

Derren Brown
— Page 25



All aboard

The Ghost Train is
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Visit venue websites

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Call 01902 552106

Patrick Monahan
Thu at 7.30pm, £14
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Call 0121 200 1892

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Gadget Show Live
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National Exhibition Centre,
Birmingham, B40 1NT.
Call 0121 780 4141

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verhampton, WV1 4AN.
Call 01902 572090

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8EQ. Call 01922 721153

Easter Eggventures
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Pleasant, Bilston, WV14 7LU.
Call 01902 552507

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Newhampton Arts Centre,
Wolverhampton, WV1 4AN.
Call 01902 572090

Cadbury Easter Egg Trail
Saturday, Sun, Mon at 11am - 4pm, £2.50
Moseley Old Hall,
Featherstone, Wolverhampton,
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Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Master of illusion prays for a Miracle



'Magic is based in dishonesty. So you have to work harder to make it have artistic merit or relevance,' says Derren Brown

MIND-BENDING master of illusion Derren Brown is bringing his latest show, *Miracle*, to the West Midlands to amaze and baffle audiences.

Previous shows *Svengali* and *In-famous* have left packed venues stunned. This will be his seventh production since 2003 but the award-winning showman, who uses psychology to create the illusion of supernatural powers, is giving few clues on what to expect this time.

"As ever, I ask people to keep the contents of the show a secret," says the two-time Olivier Award winner.

"But I can certainly say that this show has a more philosophical flavour and looks at ways of thinking that may make us happier."

"In some ways it's the boldest, most contentious show yet. But audiences are responding well to it and I just love doing it — it's quite a roller-coaster."

Having performed to one and a half million people over 13 years, Croydon-born Brown says the magic genre can continue to break boundaries.

"Magic is a very childish thing at heart: the quickest, most fraudulent route to impressing people. It's based in dishonesty. So you have to work harder to make it have artistic merit or relevance."

Miracle will be at Birmingham New Alexandra Theatre until April 11.

Dare you catch the Ghost Train?

ON a dark and stormy night, when a group of passengers are stranded at a remote rural railway stop for the night, the station-master's chilling story of a phantom loco that is an omen of death apparently begins to come true.

Arnold Ridley's comedy thriller *The Ghost Train* is a British classic that is being brought to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, April 7 to 11, in a production starring actors Walsall-born Jeffrey Holland and his real life wife Judy Buxton. Ridley was inspired to write *The Ghost Train* after being forced to spend the night at Mangotsfield station near Bristol. But he is probably best known from his latter years when he played the bumbling Private Godfrey in the BBC comedy *Dad's Army*.

Suggested

The cast for this new production of his best known play will also feature some familiar faces from TV comedy, led by Jeffrey Holland, no stranger to the railway setting having starred in *Oh Doctor Beeching!* He is best known for the 1980s sitcoms *Hi-de-Hi!* and *You Rang M'Lord?*

Educated at Queen Mary's Grammar School, Jeffrey had no aspirations to act until a friend suggested they go to local drama group for something to do. He fell victim to the acting bug and, as a result, he joined The Minster Players Amateur Dramatic Society where, at 19, he decided it was to be an actor's life for him. He went on to formally train at The Birmingham School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art and made his professional debut in Henry Cecil's play *No Fear Or Favour* at the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, in 1967.

On a stormy night a group of passengers are stranded ...

Soap villain joins Grand's angry men

ONE of TV's most popular actors, Jason Merrells, will lead the cast in the upcoming production of *Twelve Angry Men* when it is staged at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in May.

The classic court drama is touring after a successful run in London's West End.

Merrells, best known for playing Emmerdale villain Declan Macey, will play juror number 8 — the role made famous by Henry Fonda in the movie version — but will only join the cast at four UK venues, including the Grand from May 18 to 23.

His start to TV success was in hit hospital drama *Casualty* and he went on to have leading roles in *Cutting It* and *Waterloo Road*.

Garbutt coming to play the NAC

VIN Garbutt, who is now back in full swing after a long illness, is playing at the Newhampton Arts Centre, Dunkley Street, Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton on Saturday April 18.

GARBUTT will be supported by Stourbridge blues/folkman Sun-jay Brayne.

The show starts 7.30pm and tickets are £12.50 plus a 10 per cent booking fee.

The Woodman Folk Club, Ashwood Marina, Kingswinford welcomes Liverpudlian Gary Edward Jones on Friday April 17.

Tickets for members cost £7 and non-members pay £1 more. Shows start around 8.30pm.

Little Mo makes it to Downing Street

TEN Downing Street comes under the spotlight in Steve Thompson's hard-hitting comedy *Feed The Beast* at Birmingham Rep Studio Theatre from April 16 to May 2.

The latest play from the Sherlock and Doctor Who writer looks at the first 100 days of a British Prime Minister. The cast includes National Theatre actor Gerald Kyd as the PM and Kacey Ainsworth, who was Little Mo in *EastEnders*, as Downing Street's chief of staff.

Director Peter Rowe said: "It is rare to be offered the chance to direct a new play like Steve's that talks about issues which are so of the moment."

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Sizzle kicks starter with chicken tikka was nicely spiced



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Range of dishes available at Regards in Anchor Road, Aldridge



Tables all nicely laid out and service is spot on

Highest Regards as restaurant curries favour for good service

GOING for a curry has become something of a favourite pastime in Blighty. The suggestion of a night eating a spicy meat dish brings fist pumps from friends and family all over the country.

It's become as much a part of our culture as tea, football and – unfortunately – the term of endearment 'bae'. A good curry can banish a cold; I'm not sure a doctor would prescribe one but it works, I swear.

So three of us headed out to Regards in Aldridge on one particularly cold, dank evening to stick two fingers up to the miserable weather.

We were ruddy hungry. It'd been a long day. So a curry seemed the best remedy to our grumbling bellies. We'd been before, so knew what to expect. The service, as al-

By Leigh Sanders

ways, was spot on from the off.

Coats were taken immediately. A prime seating located near a heater was offered. Drinks orders were taken without a pause.

And so we were left to peruse the menu once the pleasures were completed. The choice here is great. There's a lot of what you'd expect – Balti dishes, bhunas, kormas, rogans. But there are also some treats too.

Choice

Regards offer a selection of combination dishes for those feeling under pressure from all the choice on offer. Adore two curries and unsure which one you want today? Have them both. This section of the menu offers up a variety of options. And if none quite suits your taste, just put a quiet request in and a combination of your choice

isn't usually a problem. Regards also claim to be specialists in Tawa dishes. Either chicken, lamb or prawn, they're cooked with diced onions, green peppers and aromatic herbs and spices.

I opted for the sheek kebab to start. They were plump, juicy and full of flavour. Sometimes meat dishes like these can be a little dry, but certainly not on this occasion. Thumbs up!

It's never difficult to catch the eye of a member of staff and they attend immediately. Drinks were topped up and we were ready for the mains.

Here is where the combination dishes came into play. Chicken jalfrezi and lamb masala arrived, accompanied by pilau rice and a cheese naan.

The portions, again, were spot on. There was enough of each curry to get a real taste without pushing you over the edge. The rice

was great at soaking up the sauce and the naan, a little light on cheese maybe, certainly benefitted from a variety of flavours to be dipped into.

What can also be noted here is these curries feel quite light for their food type. Sometimes Indian food can be too rich and heavy, but this is certainly not the case here. It makes a nice change.

Ideal

However, it must also be said that they're a little light on the spice. This would be the ideal place for somebody just starting out on their curry voyage; even the medium dishes are very kind to the taste buds. Pretty full we didn't feel we could manage a dessert.

It was not much of a wait for the bill – a real bugbear of ours when the opposite occurs and the polite staff more than earned their tip.

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Amanda Mealing
Casualty (BBC1, 9.10pm)
Connie continues to help her friend Alfred, who has motor neurone disease, and gives him special treatment. But as his condition deteriorates, she is placed in a quandary when he asks her to help him die. A former heroin addict lies about his past to protect his future wife, little realising the danger he is putting himself in, while a young woman is brought in after deliberately crashing her car to claim on the insurance. Ethan discovers that Cal stole his money, Taylor disappears and lain applies for a new job. With a guest appearance from veteran singer and actress Anita Harris alongside Amanda Mealing, Richard Winsor, George Rainsford, William Beck, Lee Mead, Jane Hazlegrove and Michael Stevenson.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.30 Mary Berry Cooks. (R) 12.00 BBC News: Weather. 12.10 Football Focus. 12.50 Saturday Sportsday. 1.00 Bargain Hunt. (R) 2.00 Homes Under the Hammer. (R) 3.00 Escape to the Country. (R) 4.00 Final Score. 5.15 Film: Rise of the Guardians. (2012) Premiere. Magical beings from folklore unite to defeat an evil spirit plotting to steal the dreams of children. Animated adventure, with the voices of Chris Pine and Alec Baldwin. **6.40 BBC News. 6.50 Regional Programme. 7.00 The Voice UK. After seven weeks of blind auditions, two battles, two knockout rounds and two live shows, the final is here – with just four contestants remaining, all eager to be crowned winner and pick up a recording contract. Who will the public choose as The Voice 2015? Presented by Emma Willis and Marvin Humes. Last in the series. **9.10 Casualty.** Connie continues to help her friend Alfred, who has motor neurone disease, and gives him special treatment. But as his condition deteriorates, she is placed in a quandary when he asks her to help him die. A former heroin addict lies about his past to protect his future wife, little realising the danger he is putting himself in, while a young woman is brought in after deliberately crashing her car to claim on the insurance. Ethan discovers that Cal stole his money, Taylor disappears and lain applies for a new job. With a guest appearance from veteran singer and actress Anita Harris. **10.00 The National Lottery Live.** The all-important winning numbers are revealed. **10.10 BBC News: Weather. 10.30 Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker introduces highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Arsenal v Liverpool at the Emirates Stadium and Everton v Southampton at Goodison Park; National Lottery Update. **11.55 Film: Surrogates.** (2009) An FBI agent in a future where people only interact through robot doubles ventures into the real world to catch a killer. Sci-fi thriller, with Bruce Willis. **1.20 Weather for the Week Ahead. 1.25 BBC News.****

BBC2

6.05 Animal Park. (R) 7.05 The Football League Show. (R) 8.25 Film: The Sword in the Stone. (1963) 9.40 Deadly on a Mission: Pole to Pole. (R) 10.10 Deadly on a Mission: Pole to Pole. (R) 10.40 Fred Dibnah's Magnificent Monuments. (R) 11.10 The Nature of Britain. (R) 12.00 A Taste of Britain. 12.30 Michel Roux's Service. (R) 1.30 The A to Z of TV Cooking. (R) 1.35 Great Directors: Talking Pictures. 2.20 Film: Wuthering Heights. (1939) Period drama, starring Merle Oberon and Laurence Olivier. 4.00 Kew on a Plate. (R) 5.00 Gardeners' World. (R) 5.30 Easter from King's. **6.45 Film: The Young Victoria. (2009) The turbulent early years of the monarch who, shortly after being crowned, became caught in a power struggle between her mother and scheming politicians Lord Melbourne and Sir Robert Peel. Meanwhile, a romance develops with her German cousin and eventual husband, Prince Albert. Historical drama, with Emily Blunt, Rupert Friend, Paul Bettany and Miranda Richardson. **8.25 Dad's Army.** Pike borrows Mainwaring's new staff car to take his girlfriend to the cinema – but it breaks down, leaving the lovebirds stranded in the middle of nowhere. (R) **9.00 Monteverdi in Mantua: The Genius of the Vespers.** Simon Russell Beale travels to Italy to explore the volatile relationship between the Duke of Mantua and his court composer Claudio Monteverdi during the late Italian Renaissance. **10.00 QI XL.** Extended edition. Suggs, Claudia O'Doherty, Jimmy Carr and Alan Davies attempt to answer host Stephen Fry's range of fiendish questions on the theme of long-lost things. **10.45 Rik Mayall: Lord of Misrule.** Simon Callow narrates a celebration of the comedian and actor's life and work, with contributions by Michael Palin, Simon Pegg, Lenny Henry, Ben Elton and Tim McInnerny. (R) **11.45 Film: A Beautiful Mind.** (2001) Biopic of brilliant mathematician John Nash, whose genius was compromised by paranoid delusions and schizophrenia. Oscar-winning drama, starring Russell Crowe and Paul Bettany. **1.55 Film: Revenge of the Bridesmaids.** (2010) 3.15 This is BBC Two.**

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. 6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) 7.00 Canimals. (R) 7.10 Sooty. (R) 7.25 Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) 7.30 Scrambled!: Scrambled! 7.35 Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters. (R) 7.50 Scrambled!: Adventure Time. 8.30 Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. 8.50 Scrambled!: Hulk and the Agents of Smash. 9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) 10.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) 11.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) 12.30 ITV News: Weather. 12.35 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) 1.40 Film: The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery. (1966) Comedy, starring Frankie Howerd. 3.30 Off Their Rockers. (R) 4.00 Big Star's Little Star. (R) 5.00 Thunderbirds Are Go. **6.15 ITV News: Weather. 6.30 New You've Been Framed! New series. Surreal comedy from the mind of Harry Hill, inspired by viewers' home videos. **7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway.** Little Ant and Dec put England captain Wayne Rooney through his paces with their cheeky style of questioning, and Ashley Roberts challenges the hosts in the final round of Ant v Dec, as 2014 champion Dec tries to retain his title. Broadchurch actress Olivia Colman is the star guest announcer, and as usual, a member of the studio audience plays for the contents of a commercial break. Last in the series. **8.30 You're Back in the Room.** Diversity pose as mannequins for the hypnotised contestants to decorate, with a general knowledge quiz, flower-arranging task and pizza-making also on the menu. Last in the series. **9.35 The Jonathan Ross Show.** The host welcomes Kylie Minogue, Ethan Hawke, Bear Grylls and Clare Balding, and introduces music by Brits Critics' Choice winner James Bay. Last in the series. **10.30 ITV News: Weather. 10.50 Film: Forgetting Sarah Marshall.** (2008) A jilted man takes a trip to Hawaii, only to find his ex and her new boyfriend are staying at the same resort. Romantic comedy, with Jason Segel, Kristen Bell and Russell Brand. **12.45 Jackpot247. 3.00 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. (R) 3.40 ITV Nightscreen.****

CHANNEL 4

6.15 How I Met Your Mother. 6.40 How I Met Your Mother. 7.05 The King of Queens. (R) 7.30 The King of Queens. (R) 8.00 The Morning Line. 9.00 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 9.30 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 10.00 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 10.35 Frasier. (R) 11.05 Frasier. (R) 11.35 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 12.05 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 12.30 Marvel's Agents of SHIELD. (R) 1.30 Channel 4 Racing. Live coverage from Haydock Park and Kempton Park. 4.10 Come Dine with Me. A week of dinner parties in Tunbridge Wells, Kent. (R) 5.15 The Simpsons. Bart catches Principal Skinner in a compromising situation. (R) 5.45 The Simpsons. Bart acquires a credit card. **6.10 The Simpsons. Homer strikes up an unlikely friendship with Chief Wiggum during a stint of community service, but the honeymoon period is brought to an abrupt end during a showdown with the town. (R) **6.40 Channel 4 News. 7.00 The Lakes: Walking Through History.** Tony Robinson walks 50 miles from Penrith to Ambleside and on to the Irish Sea at Ravenglass, exploring how the Romans conquered the Lake District. (R) **8.00 The World's Wildest Weather.** A flash flood in New Zealand that washed a dozen eels onto a street, a swarm of seemingly flying spiders in Brazil, and a strange wave that submerged an entire town in Argentina. (R) **9.00 End of the World Night.** Humans started predicting the end of the world around 5,000 years ago, but while prophets have warned of impending doom, today scientists are anxious about the possibility of global Armageddon, and it's a subject that fascinates many – frequently tackled in blockbuster films. In this one-off special, some of the world's foremost academics evaluate the many threats to civilisation, and reveal how it could all end. **10.35 Film: Knowing.** (2009) An astrophysicist decodes a page of numbers revealing the dates of a series of disasters and tries to prevent them happening. Mystery thriller, starring Nicolas Cage and Rose Byrne. **12.55 Alan Carr: Chatty Man. (R) 1.50 Film: French Connection II. (1975) 3.55 Hollyoaks. (R)****

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! 10.30 SpongeBob SquarePants. 11.05 Access. 11.10 Ice Road Truckers. (R) 12.05 Ice Road Truckers. (R) 1.00 Ice Road Truckers. (R) 2.05 Film: The Devil's Brigade. (1968) 4.30 The Nightmare Neighbour Next Door. (R) 5.30 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **6.20 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. A special edition of the programme giving an insight into the world of debt collection from the perspectives of people who owe money, their creditors and those who collect the payments. There are updates on some of the stories featured in the series earlier in the year, while two new cases reveal that life-changing debt can affect anyone – no matter how wealthy they appear to be. (R) **7.15 Police Interceptors.** Jim intercepts a car containing cannabis, a late-night reveler takes himself into trouble and Sgt Baxter has his work cut out when confronted by a dishonest driver. (R) **8.00 5 News Weekend. 8.05 NCIS.** An investigation into a rape and murder revives harrowing memories for Ducky, who once worked on a similar case in which the killer was never captured and vowed to return. (R) **9.00 NCIS: The Port-to-Port Killer.** The agents examine the death of a seaman and find themselves working alongside Barrett. Gibbs makes his displeasure about the circumstances of the case well known, prompting the rest of the investigators to worry that he might be about to leave the NCIS again. Meanwhile, Ziva introduces her new boyfriend to her teammates. (R) **10.00 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation.** Russell and the team investigate a suspected hit-and-run, but the lack of skid marks on the road and the unusual impact angle leads them to think that this could be a suicide. **10.55 Film: Educating Rita.** (1983) A Liverpool hairdresser enrolls on an Open University course, bringing much-needed inspiration to a boozey, world-weary tutor. Comedy drama, starring Michael Caine. **1.05 SuperCasino. 3.10 Grand Theft Auto: UK. (R) 4.00 Nanna Love: 50 Shades of Granny. (R) 4.50 Make It Big. (R) 5.15 Angels of Jarm. (R) 5.40 Roary the Racing Car. (R)****

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Great Movie Mistakes III: Not in 3D. 8.00 Top Gear. 9.10 Dusty: Pretty Woman (1990) 11.05 Family Guy 12.35 Killer Magic. 1.05 Him & Her: The Wedding. 3.30 Great TV Mistakes. 4.00 Close Close.
BBC Four
7.00 Chemistry – A Volatile History. 8.00 Wild China. 9.00 Inspector Montalbano. 10.40 Definitely Dusty. 11.40 Dusty Springfield at the BBC. 12.40 Top of the Pops. (2008) 1.15 Disco at the BBC. 2.15 Wild China. 3.15 Sounds of the 70s. 2: Art House Glam – Get in the Swing. 3:45 Close.
ITV2
12.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. 1.20 Reggie & Thunderbirds: No Strings Attached. 2.25 Film: Beethoven's 2nd (1993) 4.15 Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records. 4.30 Mr Bean. 5.40 Film: Evan Almighty (2007) 7.30 Film: The Mummy Returns (2001) 10.00 Celebrity Juice: Easter Special. 10.50 Ibiza Weekender. 11.50 Film: Death Race (2008) 1.55 Hell's Kitchen. 2.35 Crazy Beaches. 3.00 Teleshopping
ITV3
11.20 Film: Carry On Jack (1963) 1.10 Film: Carry On Cowboy (1966) 3.10 Film: Carry On Screaming (1966) 5.05 Film: Carry On Follow That Camel (1967) 7.05 Film: Carry On Cleo (1964) 9.00 Carry On Forever. 10.00 Film: Carry On Camping (1969) 11.50 Film: 10 Little Indians (1974) 1.50 On the Buses. 2.15 ITV3 Nightscreen. 2.30 Teleshopping
ITV4
1.50 Film: Death of a Gunfighter (1969) 3.45 Film: The Hanging Tree (1959) 6.00 Storage Wars: Texas. 6.55 Shed and Buried. 7.55 River Monsters. 9.00 Film: Hard to Kill (1990) 11.00 Live FIA Formula E Championship. 1.30 Anthony Joshua: The Journey. 2.30 Nitro Circus. 2.50 ITV4 Nightscreen. 3.00 Teleshopping
E4
11.30 Melissa & Joey. 12.30 Baby Daddy. 1.30 How I Met Your Mother. 4.00 The Big Bang Theory. 9.00 Film: Rush Hour 3 (2007) 10.50 Rude Tube. 11.50 Troy. 12.55 The 100. 1.50 2 Broke Girls. 2.20 How I Met Your Mother. 3.50 Taking New York. 4.55 Celebrity Come Dine with Me: Made in Chelsea Special. **Film4
11.00 The Lost World (1960) 1.00 My Neighbour Totoro (1988) 2.50 Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2010) 4.40 Inkheart (2008) 6.50 Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian (2009) 9.00 Friends with Benefits (2011) 11.10 Vehicle 19 (2013) 12.50 The Omen (1976) 3.15 Close**

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CHOICE



Indian Summers (Channel 4, 9pm)
As the British community turns out in force for the murder trial, Ian is racked with guilt about Ramu's arrest and prepares to act as his alibi, while Soonie takes advantage of the court case to gain some much-needed legal experience. Leena is torn apart in the witness box, causing Dougie to publicly support her – a move that humiliates Sarah. Ralph is terrified that the truth of Adam's true paternity will be revealed, while Aafin finally admits his true feelings for Alice. Drama set during the summer of 1932, telling the story of the decline of the British Empire and the birth of modern India. Starring Jaiy Khan, Ikhlague Khan, Edward Hogg, Julie Walters, Henry Lloyd-Hughes, Rick Warden, Peter Sullivan and Aysha Kala.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 7.30 Match of the Day. (R) **9.00 David Suchet:** In the Footsteps of St Peter. **9.00 Live Easter Sunday** – From Manchester Cathedral. **11.00 Uribi et Orbi.** **11.25 Bargain Hunt.** (R) **12.15 MOTD2 Extra.** With Mark Chapman and the Match of the Day team. **1.00 BBC News:** Weather. **1.15 Film:** The Muppets. (2011) Comedy, starring Jason Segel. **2.55 Escape to the Country.** (R) **3.55 The Truth About Fat.** (R) **4.55 Songs of Praise.** **5.30 BBC News.** **5.50 Regional Programme.**
6.00 Countryfile. The show comes from the Brecklands of Norfolk, where for Easter Sunday Matt Baker learns all about the importance of rabbits to the area – from their part in maintaining the heath to the link between rabbits and the stone-curel, one of the rarest visiting birds. Ellie Harrison goes foraging for scrap metal to make sculptures, and visits Grimes Graves – the remains of Neolithic flint mines – and James Wong is in Liverpool for the launch of the Grow Wild campaign. Plus, Tom Hare reveals how the supply of fresh potatoes is outstripping demand. Including Weather for the Week Ahead.
7.00 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce and the team visit Belton House in Lincolnshire, finds include Chairman Mao memorabilia and a funeral standard reportedly snatched from Oliver Cromwell's coffin.
8.00 Michael McIntyre's Easter Night at the Coliseum. The comedian presents an evening of variety from the Coliseum Theatre in London.
9.00 Poldark. Ross tries to form an alliance with his fellow mine-owners to build their own smelting company. Demelza resolves to reconcile Verity with Captain Blamey, and Mark has a new love.
10.00 BBC News.
10.20 Regional Programme.
10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League matches, which see Sunderland v Newcastle United at the Stadium of Light and Burnley v Tottenham Hotspur at Turf Moor.
11.30 Film: Son of Rambow. (2007) Comedy, with Bill Milner.
1.00 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.05 BBC News.**

BBC2

6.05 Gardeners' World. (R) **6.35 Countryfile.** (R) **7.35 The Beechgrove Garden.** **8.05 The Gospel of John.** **9.00 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites.** **10.30 Back in Time for Dinner.** (R) **11.30 Michel Roux's Service.** (R) **1.30 Film: King of Kings.** (1961) **4.05 Flog It!** (R) **4.50 Film: Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time.** (2010) Fantasy adventure, starring Jake Gyllenhaal.
6.35 Poldark. The heater in the caravan breaks down. Last in the series.
7.00 Springwatch at Easter. The wildlife programme returns for a one-off edition showcasing the best of British wildlife just as the countryside is bursting into colour and life and the breeding season is getting under way. Chris Packham and Michaela Strachan will be hoping for plenty of eggs at one of the UK's largest seabird colonies, Martin Hughes-Games reports from Suffolk and Simon King is on Islay in the Inner Hebrides. (R)
8.00 Caribbean with Simon Reeve. Simon begins the last leg of his journey in Nicaragua and visits the Rama-Kriol people, who face losing their ancestral homes due to the construction of a new transoceanic waterway. Simon then discovers Hondurans living in the grip of some of the most violent criminal gangs in the world, with San Pedro Sula having the highest murder rate of any city on the planet. Last in the series.
9.00 Louis Theroux: Transgender Kids. Louis travels to San Francisco, where he spends time with children who are undergoing gender-reassignment treatment at UCSF Hospital's Child and Adolescent Gender Centre.
10.00 Bluestone 42. New room-mates Ellen and Bird soon start bickering and Towerblock keeps putting off the difficult phone call home to his wife.
10.30 Jack Dee – So What? A 2013 stand-up performance at London's Hammersmith Apollo.
11.30 Film: Invincible. (2006) Fact-based sporting drama about an American football fan given the chance to play for the team he has supported all his life. With Mark Wahlberg.
1.10 Film: Hooper. (1978) **2.45 Sign Zone: Countryfile.** (R) **3.40 Holby City.** (R) **4.40 This Is BBC Two.**

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knockout Street. **6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures.** (R) **7.00 Canimals.** (R) **7.10 Sooty.** (R) **7.25 Signed Stories: Share a Story.** (R) **7.30 Scrambled!** **9.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R) **10.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R) **11.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R) **12.35 ITV News: Weather.** **12.45 Murder, She Wrote.** (R) **1.40 River Monsters.** (R) **2.10 Film: Agent Cody Banks.** (2003) **4.05 Reggie & Thunderbirds: No Strings Attached.** **5.05 Catchphrase.** (R)
6.00 Regional Programme; Weather. **6.10 ITV News: Weather.**
6.30 The Chase: Celebrity Special. Olympic gold medalist Greg Rutherford, Birds of a Feather star Lesley Joseph, Emmerdale's Matthew Wolfenden and football pundit Chris Kamara play for charity. Bradley Walsh hosts. (R)
7.30 Off Their Rockers. Pamela looks for love on a dating app. Seb mixes up his medication and Rosemary takes a peek at her grandson's internet history.
8.00 Vera. New series. Return of the crime drama starring Brenda Blethyn. The detective investigates a fire that rips through a holiday park on the Northumberland coast, destroying three cabins. A young woman's body is discovered and the resort's owner, Jim Viner, fears the victim is his sister Deena when he returns from a weekend away with his daughter Clare. With Jim's suspicions confirmed, a police report then reveals Clare's boyfriend Ryan and his friends had been partying near the scene hours before the blaze started, but where are they now, and where is Deena's best friend Sally?
10.00 ITV News: Weather.
10.20 Bear Grylls: Mission Survive. The three remaining contenders battle to be crowned winner, as they abseil down a waterfall and follow the sound of a distress signal through a mangrove swamp. Last in the series. (R)
11.20 The Nation's Favourite 70s Number One. The 20 greatest hits of the 1970s, as voted for by the public, featuring interviews with hit-makers such as Art Garfunkel, Blondie, Abba and Gloria Gaynor. Narrated by Zoe Ball. (R)
12.40 The Store. **2.30 The Jeremy Kyle Show USA.** (R) **3.15 ITV Nightscreen.** **5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.05 How I Met Your Mother. **6.30 How I Met Your Mother.** **6.55 How I Met Your Mother.** **7.15 How I Met Your Mother.** **7.35 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **8.00 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **8.30 Frasier.** (R) **9.00 Frasier.** (R) **9.30 Sunday Brunch.** **12.30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces.** (R) **1.30 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **1.55 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **2.25 The Simpsons.** (R) **2.55 Film: Honey, I Blew Up the Kid.** (1992) A scientist perfects a device for enlarging objects, but accidentally turns his infant son into a giant. Disney comedy sequel, with Rick Moranis. **4.40 Film: Hop.** (2011) The Easter bunny's son abandons the chocolate-delivering business to seek his fortune in Hollywood. Part-animated comedy, starring James Marsden, with the voice of Russell Brand.
6.30 Channel 4 News.
7.00 Three in a Bed. A week of competitive B&B hosting, featuring a loud student party, supercar-racing at Silverstone, some cordon-bleu cooking and a slice of rural bliss.
8.00 Great Canal Journeys. Timothy West and Prunella Scales travel along the Forth and Clyde Canal and the Union Canal in a coast-to-coast adventure from Edinburgh to Glasgow. Last in the series.
9.00 Indian Summers. As the British community turns out in force for the murder trial, Ian is racked with guilt about Ramu's arrest and prepares to act as his alibi, while Soonie takes advantage of the court case to gain some much-needed legal experience. Leena is torn apart in the witness box, causing Dougie to publicly support her – a move that humiliates Sarah. Ralph is terrified that the truth of Adam's true paternity will be revealed, while Aafin finally admits his true feelings for Alice.
10.05 Gogglebox. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. Narrated by Caroline Aherne. (R)
11.10 Film: The Angels' Share. (2012) Four people on community service plan to turn their fortunes around by stealing a cask of valuable whisky. Ken Loach's comedy drama, starring Paul Brannigan and John Henshaw.
1.00 Film: Qissa: The Tale of a Lonely Ghost. (2013) **2.50 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **5.05 Jamie's Money Saving Meals.** (R) **5.30 The Common Denominator.** (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! Peppa Pig. **6.05 Angelina Ballerina.** (R) **6.20 Pip Ahoy!** (R) **6.30 The Mr Men Show.** (R) **6.40 Chloë's Closet.** (R) **6.55 Roobarb and Custard Too.** (R) **7.00 Make Way for Noddy.** (R) **7.15 Paw Patrol.** (R) **7.25 Little Princess.** (R) **7.40 Wanda and the Alien.** (R) **7.55 Zack and Quack.** **8.15 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom.** (R) **8.30 Jelly Jamm.** (R) **8.45 LazyTown.** **9.15 Dora and Friends.** (R) **9.45 Film: Thomas & Friends: Tale of the Brave.** (2014) Animated adventure, with the voice of Ben Small. **10.55 Nickelodeon's Kids' Choice Awards 2015.** **12.05 Film: Patch Adams.** (1998) Comedy drama, with Robin Williams. **2.20 Film: Baby Boom.** (1987) Comedy, starring Diane Keaton. **4.25 Film: Fairytale: A True Story.** (1997) Fact-based drama, with Florence Hoath and Elizabeth Earl.
6.15 5 News Weekend.
6.20 Film: Kelly's Heroes. (1970) A rebellious American soldier fighting in occupied France learns from a captive German officer the whereabouts of a fortune in Nazi gold. Recruiting the aid of three fellow soldiers, he puts together a daring plan to penetrate enemy lines to get their hands on the bullion. Second World War adventure, starring Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas, Donald Sutherland, Don Rickles and Harry Dean Stanton. Edited for language.
9.00 Film: Hummingbird. (2013) Premiere. A haunted special forces soldier returns to London from Afghanistan and assumes another man's identity, hoping to make a fresh start. He is drawn into the city's criminal underworld, where his skills prove valuable to the highest bidder, and plots revenge against the gangster who killed his girlfriend. Crime thriller, with Jason Statham and Agata Buzek.
11.10 Film: Blitz. (2011) An uncompromising cop with controversial violent methods is set on the trail of a serial killer who preys on police officers. Crime thriller, with Jason Statham.
1.10 SuperCasino. Viewers get the chance to take part in live interactive gaming, with a mix of roulette-wheel spins and lively chat from the presenting team. **3.10 The Gadget Show.** Join tests a selection of curved TVs. (R) **4.00 House Doctor.** A cluttered B&B on the Norfolk coast. (R) **4.25 Make It Big.** (R) **5.15 Angels of Jarm.** (R) **5.40 Roary the Racing Car.** (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 The Voice UK 9.15 Film: Transsiberian (2008) **11.00 Family Guy** **11.45 Killer Magic** **12.15 American Dad!** **12.35 Family Guy** **12.55 Bluestone 42** **1.25 I Survived a Zombie Apocalypse 2.20 Beaten by My Boyfriend 3.20 Great Movie Mistakes 2: The Sequel 3.30 Killer Magic** **4.00 Close**
BBC Four
7.00 Arena: Oooh Er, Missus! The Frankie Howard Story **8.00 Shakespeare's Mother: The Secret Life of a Tudor Woman 9.00 Lost Cities of the Ancients 10.00 The Truth About Meters 11.00 Freddie Mercury: The Great Pretender – Director's Cut 12.25 Queen: The Legendary 1975 Concert 1.15 Mr Blue Sky: The Story of Jeff Lynne and ELO 2.15 Jeff Lynne's ELO at Hyde Park** **ITV2**
12.45 Scorpion 1.35 You've Been Framed! **2.05 Mr Bean 3.15 Film: E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial** (1982) **5.35 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway 7.10 Film: Despicable Me** (2010) **9.00 Film: Skyfall** (2012) **11.55 Film: Harold & Kumar Get the Munchies** (2004) **1.40 Mom 2.20 Teleshopping 5.50 ITV2 Nightscreen** **ITV3**
11.45 Film: Carry On Henry (1971) **1.35 Film: Carry On at Your Convenience** (1971) **3.25 Film: Carry On Loving** (1970) **5.15 Film: Carry On Matron** (1972) **7.05 Film: Carry On Up the Jungle** (1970) **9.00 Carry On Forever** **10.00 Film: Carry On Girls** (1973) **11.50 Film: Steptoe and Son Ride Again** (1973) **1.50 Wycliffe 2.45 On the Buses 3.10 ITV3 Nightscreen 3.40 Emmerdale** **ITV4**
6.30 Goodwood 73rd Members' Meeting 7.30 Counting Cars 8.00 River Monsters 9.00 Film: The Deer Hunter (1978) **12.45 Film: Boogymal (2004) 2.35 Nitro Circus 3.00 Teleshopping** **E4**
1.00 Film: The NeverEnding Story II: The Next Chapter (1991) **2.45 Rude (ish) Tube Shorts 3.00 The Frozen Phenomenon 4.00 Celebrity Come Dine with Me: Made in Chelsea Special 5.00 The Big Bang Theory** **8.00 Film: My Sister's Keeper** (2009) **10.10 The Inbetweeners 12.25 Channel 4's Comedy Gala 1.25 The 100 2.20 Revenge 3.05 Rules of Engagement** **Film4**
11.00 Escape from the Planet of the Apes (1971) **1.00 Ponyo** (2008) **3.10 Clueless** (1995) **5.05 The Iron Giant** (1998) **8.45 The Eagle** (2011) **9.00 Snow White & the Huntsman** (2012) **11.25 From Dusk Till Dawn** (1996) **1.35 Damien: Omen II** (1978) **3.50 Close**

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Blade: Trinity, Channel 5, 11pm
The fearless warrior's blood-sucking foes frame him for murder, forcing him to go on the run from the FBI while his enemies resurrect the first and most powerful of their kind – Dracula himself. Fantasy action thriller sequel, with Wesley Snipes and Dominic Purcell. (2004)

TUESDAY
Carry On at Your Convenience, ITV, 11.10pm
Production at toilet manufacturers WC Boggs is brought to a halt when an over-eager trade union representative calls a strike. However, worker unrest is quickly quelled by a jolly trip to the seaside. Comedy, starring Sid James. (1971)

WEDNESDAY
Fifty Dead Men Walking, BBC1, 11.15pm
Fact-based thriller telling the story of Martin McGartland, who was recruited as a police informant in 1980s Belfast and sent on a mission to infiltrate the IRA. He rose swiftly through the ranks, providing vital information to the British authorities. Once he was exposed, he was tortured and forced to go into hiding. Starring Jim Sturgess and Ben Kingsley. (2008)



Blade: Trinity, Monday, Channel 5, 11pm

THURSDAY
Stranger in an Amish Town, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A penniless stranger and his son turn up on the doorstep of three Amish sisters, who offer him a place to stay and a job as a handyman. The women's police officer niece is suspicious of the new arrival and tries to find out where he has come from. Romantic mystery, starring Sarah Lancaster. (2014)

FRIDAY
First Blood, ITV, 10.40pm
Vietnam veteran John Rambo is wrongfully arrested in a backwoods town and tested to the limits of his endurance by a brutal deputy. Rambo escapes from his cell and heads out to the woods, and with the forces of the law in hot pursuit he finally has the chance to fight them on his own terms. Action thriller, starring Sylvester Stallone, Brian Dennehy, Richard Crenna and David Caruso. (1982)

Griff is back on track in his journey of discovery

Sometimes, the simplest approach is the best, so we'll leave Griff Rhys Jones himself to describe the premise of his new series.

He says: "Africa. There's nowhere else quite like it. A billion people speaking thousands of languages and a paradise of wild animals and natural wonders. I'm going to take it on in an unhurried manner aboard Africa's railways. It's the ideal way to meet its people and to experience its beauty."

And that, in a nutshell, is that.

During his trip, Griff will travel through Algeria, Tunisia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa – it's a 17,000-mile journey that begins in the Moroccan city of Marrakech.

"I love Morocco," reveals Griff. "I love the feeling of being on the cusp of Africa here. What could be more authentic, you see? What could be more Moroccan, than a cup of mint tea? Except that tea was introduced by the English when they took over Tangiers and it comes all the way from China."

"So, whenever you're in Africa, the idea that we are coming here on this huge journey to look for the 'real' Africa is nonsense. You never find the real Africa, what you find is the mix that created Africa from way back."

After stocking up on a few essential supplies at a colourful local marketplace, he boards a train for a seven-hour journey to Fes, and immediately sets about making friends in the hope that they will help him pass the time.

One of his fellow travellers is a salesman selling traditional Berber remedies. Griff bravely tries a stick that doubles as a toothbrush, but balks at the idea of some brown paste used to treat worms.

Once in Fes, he hooks up with Abdul, who turns out to be arguably the city's most eccentric guide, and takes him on a tour of its medieval streets and medinas.

"This is a bit spooky isn't it?" says Griff, as he wanders around. "The whole city is like a maze which ends in dead ends and that was for defensive purposes. As you go along, you come to these huge gates and they could shut off whole quarters. The actual gates of the city of Fes were locked every night up until the 1960s."

The next stage of his journey proves to be far more difficult. He needs to get to Algeria, but as the border between that nation and Morocco is currently closed, he must fly to Spain before getting another plane to the port of Oran.

But is the disjointed trip worth it?

"I was nervous about coming to Oran, I'll confess that," he reveals. "Because there has been a lot of trouble in Algeria and Oran itself has been a centre of contention ever since the 1960s."

"Basically the war of independence that cost a million lives pretty much started here when they raided the bank and they stole three million francs to pay for weapons."

Thankfully, the hospitable locals make Griff's concerns fade away before he prepares for next week's journey.



Slow Train Through Africa with Griff Rhys Jones, Friday, ITV, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Travel Man: 48 Hours in Istanbul Channel 4, 8.30pm
We like travel. We like funny stuff. So this mix of travelogue and documentary presented by two of Channel 4's funniest guys is a winner, as this week Richard Ayoade is joined by comedian Adam Hills. They're hitting – as the title would suggest – Istanbul for the weekend, as Richard attempts to show Adam how to holiday with ruthless efficiency. Istanbul is the only city in the world to straddle two continents, and the men cross the River Bosphorus from Europe to Asia, comparing a private yacht tour and a low-price public ferry. Next, they take in an authentic Turkish shave at a local barber shop, and share an awkward moment a Turkish bath and massage parlour. Plus, they head to the Grand Bazaar market and have a go at haggling.

Code of a Killer
ITV, 9pm
You can run but you can't hide from David Threlfall at the moment. If you missed him in The Ark over on the Beeb last week, worry not, there's another chance to catch him in this new drama, for which he joins John Simm. It's based on the true story of Alec Jeffreys' (Simm) discovery of DNA fingerprinting and its first use by Detective Chief

Superintendent David Baker (Threlfall) while on the hunt for a murderer after a school girl is killed. Two years later, a second youngster is killed and a teenager confesses – but insists he's innocent of the first crime. Certain that the same man was responsible for both incidents, Baker and Jeffreys work together to prove the theory.

TUESDAY
Collectaholics BBC2, 7pm
We're used to seeing a very sun-kissed Jasmine Harman on the box checking out properties abroad, but tonight, and for the next eight weeks, she appears in something very different indeed. She joins antiques expert Mark Hill once again to help people catalogue, curate, clear out and showcase their item. The duo meet Margaret Tyler, who is obsessed with royal memorabilia and even has a whole room dedicated to Diana, Princess of Wales. The only problem is that space has become very tight, so it's Mark and Jasmine's job to convince her to value quality over quantity. They also help Chris Cornell

itemise his collection of natural history items, and Mark visits Jack Konveburg and Jan Morgan's house to take a look at their collection of design items, dating back to the 1940s.

WEDNESDAY
The Island with Bear Grylls Channel 4, 9pm

Reality TV has been around for long enough to risk becoming stale. New shows must, therefore, fight that tide by finding ever more ways to remain exciting. Channel 5 took it to new heights with 10,000 BC, which at times looked set to become the first TV show to inadvertently kill off its cast: The Island, as it returns for its second series, appears to be almost as perilous – but with the added advantage of having a lot more real-world context. Survival expert



Ice Rink on the Estate, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

Bear Grylls imparts his knowledge to teams of men and women, before splitting them up and dropping them on separate Pacific islands.

THURSDAY
Ice Rink on the Estate
ITV, 9pm
New series. When they started their careers in their home city of Nottingham, Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean received a grant from the council that allowed them to give up their jobs and focus on ice-skating. Now, the Olympic icons want to give something back, and their aim is to set up an ice rink in the heart of St Ann's estate and get the local teenagers involved in putting on a show. As training gets under way, the participants face their first performance – skating to Beethoven.

FRIDAY
Sex and the Church
BBC2, 9pm
New series. Historian Diarmaid MacCulloch explores how Christianity has shaped Western attitudes to sex, gender and sexuality throughout history. Travelling to Israel, Greece, Italy and Ireland, he begins by examining how the early Christians transformed intercourse from a biological necessity into a vice and from a pleasure into a sin.

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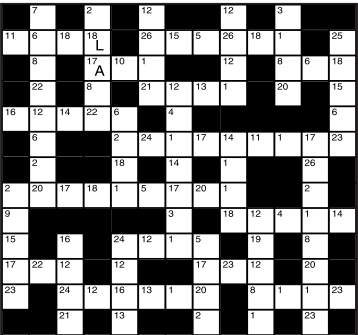
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No.319

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

F	V	Q	T	S	N	K	W	M	A	P	H	I
D	G	U	R	O	J	Z	B	C	Y	E	L	X

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

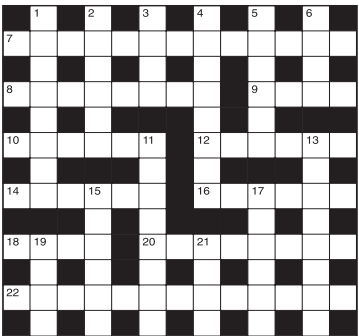
Cryptic Clues:

Across

7. A system of detecting wireless site? (13)
8. See 6 Down
9. This will cut some of the potted geraniums (4)
10. French bitterness, I seel (6)
12. See 14 Across
- 14 & 12 Ac. One acts under what has become ingrained habit (6,6)
16. Alarmingly coiled, but far from fierce (6)
18. Featureless kind of race (4)
20. Showing lack of courtesy, I'm getting the stick about it (8)
22. Forcing one to adopt the faith - or just pretending (6,7)

Down

1. Railing is in poor condition in time (8)
2. Used for shooting one of Falstaff's followers (6)
3. Scheme to put fifty in a vessel (4)
4. Filmed but not exposed (8)
5. The way of a townsman (6)
- 6 & 8Ac. Kind of call for a runner (4-8)
11. Apples required for small fish (8)
13. Kind of clause for one of the family (8)
15. Get boat in a different way (6)
17. One dog - the miner has no end! (6)
19. Guide played by the star (4)
21. Noble support, we hear (4)



Quick Clues:

Across

7. Blameworthy (13)
8. Impetus (8)
9. Entry (4)
10. Coating (6)
12. Rush (6)
14. Current (6)
16. Chief (6)
18. Fashionable (4)
20. Wizard (8)
22. Understanding (13)

Down

1. Fragrant (8)
2. Mourn (6)
3. Closed (4)
4. Hostile (8)
5. Loiter (6)
6. Lump (4)
11. Recall (8)
13. Lift (8)
15. Get away (6)
17. Charge (6)
19. Band (4)
21. Vale (4)

Sudoku

			1		2	3	6
	2	6	5				7
9			7		6		
4	1		9			6	
	6	9			3		5
2					5		7
	7			9	4	5	2
8	3	2					

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

3	4	5	6	5	2	1	8	7
5	7	3	1	1	8	4	2	9
2	8	1	4	9	7	5	6	3
9	6	7	8	3	5	2	4	1
1	2	4	9	7	6	3	5	8
8	3	5	1	2	4	7	9	6
7	9	2	5	6	3	8	1	4
6	5	8	7	4	1	9	3	2
4	1	3	2	8	9	6	7	5

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Gate; 8 Acute angle; 9 Director; 10 Pest; 12 Keeper; 14 Tartan; 15 Palace; 17 Betide; 18 Syle; 19 Well done; 21 Run at a loss; 22 Hits. Down: 2 Active part; 3 Ease; 4 Punter; 5 Secret; 6 Inspirit; 7 Felt; 11 Standing at; 13 Played an; 16 Enwrap; 17 Ballot; 18 Sort; 20 Dash. QUICK - Across: 1 Loss; 8 Positioned; 9 Handsome; 10 Same; 12 Revert; 14 Thirst; 15 Stroke; 17 Clever; 18 Glum; 19 Solitude; 21 Lugubrious; 22 Sign. Down: 2 Ornamental; 3 Sped; 4 Escort; 5 Street; 6 Conspire; 7 Idle; 11 Misleading; 13 Enormous; 16 Ensure; 17 Callow; 18 Gold; 20 Toss.

Quiz

1. What is the capital of Rhode Island?
2. Which philosopher wrote On Liberty?
3. Who wrote Moby-Dick in 1851?
4. Which star of the film Uncle Buck died in March 1994?
5. Of what is the Victoria Cross now made?
6. Who was the mother of Richard I and King John?
7. In which London park is the Serpentine?
8. What does the Russian word 'soviet' mean?
9. What is the first day of Lent called?
10. What land did the US buy from Russia in 1867?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Philosophy; 2 Campaign for Real Ale 3 Colorado; 4 Jackal; 5 Anna Sewell; 6 Lufthansa; 7 Scotland; 8 Richard Cromwell; 9 Fingerprints; 10 Copper. Niner: MISERABLY

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

753483 gives a tree,
871 gives another tree,
6232329 gives fruit.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---



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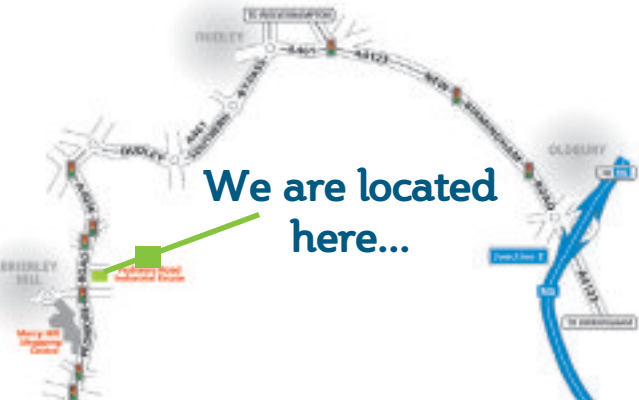
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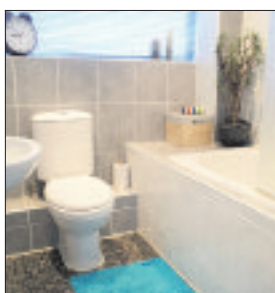
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Mazda brings lot to party

By Graham Breeze

Mazda is recovering quickly after UK sales took a big hit because of the pound to yen exchange rate – and you can expect things to get even better now that the new Mazda2 is in showrooms.

There's now a choice of 12 petrol and four diesels in a 16-strong line-up of the company's best-selling UK model and a five level grade structure of SE, SE-L, SE-L Nav, Sport and Sport Nav with prices from £11,995 to £17,395.

And with the brand's Skyactiv technology on board it's little wonder Mazda bosses are predicting a 24 percent sales growth this year against pretty flat industry sales.

The B-segment is a tough place to compete but using Skyactiv technology with its striking 'KODO – Soul of Motion' design philosophy, Mazda claim this model brings new levels of technological sophistication, driving pleasure and safety to the party.

At first glance there's no mistaking this latest addition to the Mazda family which has particularly attractive headlamp styling and a muscular stance.

But the outstanding features for me come in the safety department where Mazda has really outshone the rest of the competition in this sector.

There's an array of active safety systems which you don't normally get at this level, including Anti-lock Brakes (ABS), Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD), Electronic

Brake Assist (EBA), Dynamic Stability Control (DSC), Traction Control System (TCS) and Emergency Stop Signalling (ESS).

You also get Hill Hold Assist (HHA) and a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) as standard across the model range.

SE-L (90ps & 105ps Diesel), Sport, Sport Nav grades and the Sports Launch Edition model are further equipped with a Lane Departure Warning System (LDWS), and Smart City Brake Support (SCBS).

Operating between speeds of 2.5 and 18.5mph, SCBS automatically applies the brakes if the system detects an imminent frontal impact.

Technology

There's also an optional Safety Pack on 115ps Sport Nav models offering even higher levels of driver assistance with High Beam Control (HBC), Blind Spot Monitoring (BSM) and Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA) system, and an Active Driving Display.

Mazda has gone even further by introducing my favourite technology to the model with the arrival of head-up display to the B-segment for the first time. That means you get to see your speed displayed on the windscreen, so there's no excuse for picking up tickets.

The cabin is a comfortable place to be with increased shoulder room up front, but it's still a little tight for six-footers in the back and the boot fails the golf clubs test unless you fold down the splitting rear seats.

There's now an easy to handle "multi-media commander" situated between the front seats which enables the driver to control the seven-inch touch screen display system.



'Mazda might just be under-cooking their sales predictions. I think we will be seeing a lot of this car in the next 12 months.'

DAB radio features for the first time in the Mazda2 and, in SE-L Nav and Sport Nav grades, a new navigation system offers improved search features and three years of free map updates.

Mazda's in-car connectivity system works with compatible iPhone and Android smartphones to access a variety of free mobile content via Aha™, a cloud platform-based service which features thousands of stations, personalised, location-based services and both Twitter and Facebook audio feeds.

MZD Connect also supports iPod®, MP3 and CD playback, terrestrial radio, SMS and readout functions.

The Skyactive 105PS Sports Diesel is my favourite from the range at £17,395 and producing only 89g/km of emissions.

On top of that you can reach 62mph in 10.1secs and get a top speed of 111mph and still achieve over 80mpg.

Mazda might just be under-cooking their sales predictions.

I think we will be seeing a lot of this car in the next 12 months.



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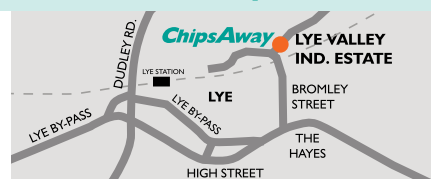
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Open-topped elegance that is affordable

By James Parker

If you've ever owned an affordably priced convertible, then you'll know that cars of this kind come with one major problem: you can't comfortably fit adult passengers in the back over any real distance.

That's because models of this sort are largely based on Focus-sized family hatchbacks that are compact to start with and become even more so at the rear once you have to find space for a bulky hood. Cabriolets based on larger, more prestigious designs do better, but they're expensive.

You'd think then, that there'd be a gap in the market here – and you'd be right. Here's the car that fills it – Vauxhall's Cascada.

From the moment you take a seat and set off in this car, it's clear that this is a luxury convertible first and foremost, rather than any kind of low-slung roadster. But that doesn't mean it can't be dynamically adept. Indeed it must be if Vauxhall's pretensions of tilting at the up-market German brands are to be credibly realised. That's why the spec sheet promises HiPerStrut suspension from the 170mph Insignia VXR. And the FlexRide adaptive damping system that does so much to make the brand's Astra VXR such a credibly competitive hot hatch.

Here though, this technology is there to dynamically improve a very different kind of car, over two tonnes in weight and lacking the kind of fixed roof that would normally be key to structural rigidity. It could have all produced a rather disastrous result, had this Cascada been simply a convertible spin-off from an ordinary Vauxhall hatch, as was its direct Astra Twin Top predecessor. But it isn't. This, in contrast, is the first time the brand has properly designed and purpose-built a opentopped car from scratch since the early 1930s. They've done the job properly.

Scores

Under the bonnet, Vauxhall has wheeled out the best it has in terms of current engine technology, including an all-new 1.6-litre SIDI (or 'Spark Ignition Direct Injection') petrol unit that offers 170PS when mated to a 6-speed automatic gearbox. If that's not fast enough, you can also ask your dealer about a 200PS manual gearbox version. There's also an entry-level 140PS 1.4-litre petrol turbo unit and two 2.0 CDTi diesels, one with 165PS and a minority interest 195PS Bi-Turbo version.

The Cascada scores straight off the bat by looking the part. It's certainly quite a size, at over 4.7m long and over 1.8m wide. When the top's down, it has a very clean profile, with no roof-top cover or visible roll-over protection disturbing the car's silhouette behind the steeply-raked A-pillar.

At the wheel where you sit quite high up, the cabin offers a mixture of Vauxhall familiarity and some hand crafted detailing you might not associate with this blue collar brand. The belt butler for example that extends over your shoulder and hands you your belt as you take your seat. All of which leaves what is probably this car's defining feature, its back seat accommodation. Once in place, most adults should be quite comfortable and it's all a world away from similarly-priced compact convertibles where in most cases, the back of the front seat tends to sit virtually against the rear seat's cushion.

Looking at one of those Golf, Megane or Peugeot 308CC-based family hatchback-shaped convertibles? They're very nice, but it would surely be even better if you were able to stretch to something a little more up-market that would have proper room for two adults in the back – an Audi A5 Cabriolet or a Volvo C70 for example. Maybe even a convertible BMW 3 Series – though that's pricier again. If that's the position you're in, then the Cascada is a car you should try. The kind of smart, stylish looks and decent rear seat space you'd expect to have to pay £30,000 to £40,000 for, all at the kind of £24,000 to £30,000 budget.

All models get the powered roof, all-round power windows, alloy wheels, daytime running lights and air conditioning you'd expect from a modern £25,000 convertible and also include rear parking sensors, LED tail lights, sports front seats, cruise control, a leather covered steering wheel, a trip computer and a digital radio with USB and Aux-in connectivity. Plusher versions like this one get heated seats with leather trim, front foglamps and rain-sensitive wipers, plus auto headlamps that can dip themselves at night.

A larger car is inevitably a heavier car. So given that unlike its family hatchback-shaped cabriolet counterparts, this Cascada has proper room for four and weighs over two tonnes, you'd expect running costs to be higher. Which is not necessarily the case, thanks to features like a start/stop system fitted across the range which cuts the engine when you don't need it, stuck in traffic or waiting at the lights.

And the results? Well, take the 1.4T 140PS petrol variant, capable of 44.8mpg on the combined cycle and 148g/km of CO2. Other Cascada variants don't fare quite as well as that: the 1.6 SIDI petrol auto for example, manages 39.2mpg on the combined cycle and 168g/km of CO2. Then there are the diesel versions of this Vauxhall, with both 165 and 195PS versions of the 2.0 CDTi unit delivering 54.3mpg on the combined cycle and 138g/km of CO2.

These days, Vauxhall is a company with some genuinely desirable products in its portfolio. Here's one of them.





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4 Pets & Animals

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guns & dogs

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Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with its Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

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A special home is needed for him due to a behavioural problem which can easily be resolved with patience and TLC.

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Loves walks, very active, loves to play, can any one offer this lovely girl a home, or long term foster home.

01588 676106.

www.dogsamaritans.org.uk

KIND HOMES WANTED
WHITNEY 12yr Jack Russell X chihuahua, lovely, loves walks
PATCH 4yr black and white border collie, shy with new

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REX 10mth Jack Russell X Spaniel, small, used to dogs/children, sweet dog
CHARLIE 4yr old handsome border collie, elderly owners can no longer care for him, affectionate well trained.
BOSS 5yr lab x staffie, chunky boy, lovely.

01588 676106.
 www.dogsamaritans.org.uk

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vets

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5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

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business directory

accountants

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commercial premises

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 Good Rates.
 Contact anytime and please leave message
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7 Jobs

building & construction

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PANEL CLADDING FIXER Must have CSCS card and be self employed. Immediate start. Call Graham 07725 962837 Email: grahambowman22@yahoo.co.uk

drivers

EXPERIENCED LUTON VAN DRIVER required, to deliver garden sheds nationwide. Salary is £325 per week Monday to Friday, must be polite, over 25 with a clean licence & a good knowledge of the UK. To apply send CV & covering letter to sales@empiresheds.co.uk

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The club is offering a great opportunity for an ambitious and enthusiastic person with drive and initiative, able to work under pressure, to take on the day to day running of it's bar and catering facilities.

Experience required in the licensing and catering trade.
 Accommodation provided.
 Salary commensurate with the responsibilities of the post.
 Couples considered.

Please email your CV to info@stourbridge-tennis-squash.co.uk or post to The Chairman, Stourbridge Lawn Tennis and Squash Club Limited, Sugar Loaf Lane, Iwerley, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY7 6PS by Thursday 16 April 2015.

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sales & marketing

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 Consultants have a vacancy for a UK Field Sales Consultant. The successful applicant will preferably have experience in selling Consultancy Services. The role will be to attend appointments throughout the UK & sell the Company's consultancy services in relation to water & drainage to new & existing clients. A knowledge of the Water Industry useful but not essential. Salary £20k + commission car & travel expenses. Applications in writing by post or email by April 17th, 2015 UK Water Services, 12 Hagley Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1PS. All vacancies@ukwaterservices.co.uk

8 Motoring

cars over £1500

CITROEN C3 VTR+, 2011, 1 owner, 19,000 miles, grey, 11 months MOT. Serviced. Very good condition. £5,250. o.n.o. 01384 872192

FORD FIESTA 1.2 style, 2008, 3dr, 40,000 miles, 10 months MOT, 2 owners, excellent condition, £3,400 ono. 07941 636448.

FORD FOCUS Estate, 1.6 TDCI, 2008, full MOT, 12 service stamps, 14k miles, any inspection, £2,250. 01902 789597, 07597 567731.

FORD MONDEO XL, 2.0 diesel, 56 reg, 6-speed, 73,000 miles, service history, good, cruise control, AC, MOT, £1,975. 01922 492217.

FORD RANGER Thunder Double Cab, 2006, Black, Full MOT, Recent service. Excellent condition. £4,600 ono. 07811 216725.

ALFA ROMEO 156

Diesel. 2004. Black. Leather Interior. Electric windows. 12 months MOT. Metallic paint. Central locking. PAS. Alloys. CD. Stereo.

Bargain.

£1,350

07811 340605.

AUDI A4 ESTATE 1999 silver, new clutch, MOT, 5475. 01584 890375.

BROWN LEATHER recliner sofas, 3 seater and 2 seater, excellent condition. £450. 0725 902412

FORD FIESTA 1.4, 5dr, petrol, 02 reg, very good condition, £999 ono. Please call 01938 570415 or 07813 047217

FORD KA 2006, 75,000 miles, MOT Sept, any trial, silver, all MOT's shown, £395 ono. 01802 636467

FORD KA STYLE 04, MoT, good condition, red, 2 lady owners. £375 ono. 07754 557861.

FORD MONDEO Auto 2001, 2.0i LX, MoT 6/15, 78k, 1 owner from new, very good condition, garaged/cared for. Good value. £680. 0121 5301515

NISSAN ALMERA 1999, 89,000 miles, metallic red, abs, air bag, electric mirrors, long MOT, CD £350 ono 01384 232586

PEUGEOT 307, 2004, 72,000 miles, black, 1.4, 16v, 5 door, 12 months MOT, well maintained, very good condition for year. £1,300. 07971 537115.

PEUGEOT 206 CONVERTIBLE, 52 reg, 57,000 miles, lady owner, leather trim, MoT'd, alloys, £1,250. o.n.o. 07754 557861

RENAULT CLIO Auto, 1.4 Expression 38k, SR, AC, PAS full MOT good condition £995. 07848 480655.

RENAULT CLIO 1.4 petrol, 2001, 85,000 miles, red, electric windows, MoT, central locking, CD, £499 ono 07800 766241.

RENAULT SCENIC 7 seater, 55 reg, grey, MoT May. £1,400. 07958 506305.

VAUXHALL VECTRA 1.9 SXi CDTI Diesel, 2004, black, e/w, radio, cd, MoT'd, sat nav, alloy wheels, 151,200 ono. 07954 419531.

VOLVO V70 2001, 7 seater family pack, MoT September 2015, blue, petrol, clean for year, drives well £595. 07938 446750.

VOLVO V70 ESTATE. Automatic, 02, 112k, MoT'd, SH, Very reliable. Good condition. £1,195. Genuine callers only please. 07850 330251.

VW PASSAT Estate, 03 Reg., MoT, 5 new tyres, £750 o.n.o. 01902 423198.

classic cars

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commercial vehicles

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www.homersdrivingschool.co.uk

motorbikes

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VESPA PX 125, 13,000 miles, 2 months MOT, in Pistachio. Nice Mod Scooter. £1,500. o.n.o. 07889 943467 or 01902 738363.

YAMAHA TYROS 1 professional quality keyboard, very good condition, buyer collects. £500 ono. 07807 205745.

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9 Local Information

public & legal notices

Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 11 OF APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

Proposed development at: 105 Cemetery Road, Previously open land between Cemetery Road and Albert Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 8AH.

Take notice that application is being made by Mr Dale Faulkner for planning permission to: Single storey rear extension and first floor rear extension.

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, The Council House, Priory Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1HF within 21 days of the date of this notice.

Mr Dale Faulkner
 26th March 2015

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general

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6 Property

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accommodation to let

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KIDDERMINSTER
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TWO BED DOUBLE UNIT
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coast & country

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Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

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Gabriel is given the green light to rejoin club

TARRYCK Gabriel has been given the green light to rejoin Halesowen Cricket Club.

The club's overseas player is currently making plans to make the trip from St Lucia to spend the summer at Seth Somers Park after a successful visa application.

And he said: "I am really looking forward to being back with Halesowen for a second season.

"I know the boys very well and I like the look of the new signings the club has made.

"It's fair to say I didn't have the most successful season last year, but I'm sure the benefit of a year's experience of playing in England will help. This is a big year for me and the club."

Meanwhile the club have been handed a double boost off the field with more grants coming their way.

The England and Wales Cricket Trust had already agreed to underwrite a substantial part of replacing the roll on cover tops and purchase of matting.

And repairs to the clubhouse roof can now be completed following the news that the Ibstock Cory Environmental trust had agreed to fund the project.

Tickets are selling fast for the special appearance from charismatic former World Darts semi-finalist Wayne Mardle at the club on Wednesday April 29.

Stourbridge based micro-brewery, Green Duck Beer Co have stepped up to the oche to sponsor the evening which will feature exhibition darts and a Q&A with the Sky Sports man.

Tickets are £10 and available from the club or online at sport-stalkevents.co.uk.

Talks are last throw of dice for Heathens

CRADLEY HEATHENS chief Nigel Pearson admits talks with Dudley council represent "one last throw of the dice" in the club's search for a new home.

Pearson has revealed 'positive' discussions have taken place between the club and council leader Peter Lowe over the possibility of building a new track in the borough.

But the Heathens chairman admits it is now a case of now or never in the club's long search for a permanent home.

"There are no promises, but at least we will know for sure," said Pearson.

"In this case we have a council leader who is making a genuine effort to reach a successful conclusion." The Heathens were one of the top teams in British speedway for decades before their track was sold.

Week's first result is a draw

FIRST result of the week was a draw agreed in the remaining adjournment against Olton in Birmingham league Div 3.

This meant Stourbridge Chess Club (SCC) lost the last match of the season 2.5-3.5.

The final record is won six, drawn two, lost three to leave SCC comfortably in the top half of the table.

SCC challenged at the top of the division for a while but dropped a couple of disappointing points mid-season and were always playing catch up from then on.

On Monday SCC's Wolverhampton league Div 3 team ventured into central Birmingham to play at champions in waiting St George's, with their eight

wins record, while the club's Birmingham league Div 1 team played at Sutton Coldfield. Given we needed four reserves at Sutton Coldfield it was difficult to judge who would have the hardest match.

Sutton Coldfield had a very strong team assembled. Three of the reserves lost quickly. Julie Wilson on board four could have forced a draw but declined to, as this would give Sutton Coldfield the match. She played on only to overlook at combination and also lost.

Keith Arkell drew on board one while his brother Nick won on board two.

SCC had been comprehensively beaten thanks to four reserves not scoring.

The Wolverhampton league Div 3 team struggled at St George's. Thanks to Tony Shaw scoring a great draw on board one against a higher graded opponent SCC managed to avoid a whitewash and should now finish third in division 3. An impressive season.

On Wednesday the Wolverhampton league division 2 team travelled to Telford to face a very strong team pushing for the title. It was, as expected, a very tough encounter.

The final result was a 5.5-0.5 win for Telford, with Steve Jukes getting a draw against much higher rated Gostelow (183). Jet Ajmal held Richard Thompson until the very last moments, and had chances along the way, before losing on time.

Lions double up in beating KC side

Stourbridge Lions 29 KCRFC's 23
BOTH sides came into this local derby very much in form,each having lost only once in their last six league games.

And although Stourbridge deservedly won the bragging rights by completing the double over KC's the visitors crucial losing bonus point means they only need a win in their last fixture on April 11 at home against rock bottom Tamworth to be assured of third spot in Mids 2 West (N).

DuncanChance again got his hands on the ball and cut inside the cover to cross unopposed for the lead.

After 25 minutes a penalty kicked to touch five metres from Stour's line at last gave KC's field position for the first time.

However, the throw went astray and nothing much was going right for them until a quick tap by scrum half Chris Pinner initiated a sustained attack in the hosts 22.

Excellent

An improvised basketball-type pass by fly-half Rhys Pritchard to Mike Protheroe gave the flanker room down the short side to go over for the equalising try wide out on the right and Pinner's excellent conversion put Kidder ahead 7-5.

Seven minutes later Alex Thompson won a penalty just outside the 22 which Pinner confidently knocked over but from the restart a good aerial claim by the Lions was backed up by some slick handling.

This put centre Harry Wainwright over for a try which he converted himself.

On the stroke of half time a high tackle gave Pinner another penalty chance from slightly closer range which he snaffled up but KC's had not used the wind to their best advantage and their narrow 13-12 interval lead looked worryingly vulnerable.

A missed tackle gave fullback George Tillesley an easy run in for a try which Wainwright converted to nudge the Lions ahead 19-16 and two minutes later a Wainwright penalty extended the lead . Stourbridge's Scott Langdon crossed for a bonus point fourth try. KC's lock Alex Baldwin scored last.

Aston stops opponent in second



Boxer Ryan Aston on the offensive during the bout in Dudley at the weekend

IT'S onwards and upwards for Ryan Aston and Ricky Summers after they added to their win ratios at the Venue in Dudley.

Dudley's Aston scored a great second-round stoppage over Martins Kukulis, as he went up the gears to bash away at the body.

Tipton's Summers went the distance with Josef Obeslo, but managed to hurt the Czech toughman in both the first and fourth round.

The two have now been told to prepare for action at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on Saturday June 6, where Aston will be looking to box for a title at light middleweight.

Summers will undertake a six-round against an opponent who, as the show is due to be aired on BoxNation, could be a formidable light heavyweight from Frank Warren's camp.

It's 10 without defeat now for

Aston, who took less time to dispose of the Latvian than it took former sparring partner George Groves and fearsome world champion Gennady Golovkin.

Emerging to the strains of Blue Moon, he brought the sun down on Kukulis with 20 seconds of the second left.

All Kukulis could do was cover up and avoid getting knocked out, as Aston bashed away.

Tipton take the victory from tense match up

Heath Hayes 0 Tipton 2

TIPTON came out on top in a tense Midland League basement battle.

With both Heath Hayes and Tipton rapidly running out of games in their fight to beat the drop it was the visitors who grabbed three precious points.

Tipton were making all the running, Lewis Wright agonised as his curling drive cannoned off the home crossbar with keeper Mark Wiggins beaten

Gurjit Singh ensured Tipton quickly nosed in front when, in the ninth minute, he created sufficient space to whip in a low cross towards the far post with the ball being touched home by the onrushing Sean Pugh.

At this early stage Tipton were dominant and with the home side still struggling to fashion some worthy movements of their own. Mark Ganderton's enterprise won the visitor's a flag-kick followed by another Pugh effort not too far over the top.

Heath Hayes were now beginning to construct some good play of their own and on 16 minutes a splendid ball from Joe McNulty pierced the Tipton defence, but the imposing Lucan Spittle was on hand to avert the danger.

Spittle starred for the visitors again as he headed clear Charlie Ware's free-kick and turned aside a goal bound header from Chris Deakin.

Soon afterwards, Andrew Davis fired just over the top for Heath Hayes.

Heath Hayes found it tough to crack a resilient Tipton defence. Tipton then settled the game when Pugh slotted past Wiggins.

Injury forces Bears' Best to quit playing

Warwickshire all-rounder Paul Best has been forced to retire from cricket with a back injury at the age of 24.

Best, who made the decision after the club's pre-season tour to the Caribbean, said: "This has been not been an easy decision to make.

The stress fractures I have had to endure the last two seasons have taken their toll on my body and I do not believe I can perform to the level I have in the past. It is for this reason that I have decided to retire from professional cricket in order to pursue another career path.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Warwickshire both as a professional and an age-group player and I would like to thank everyone involved for their invaluable support.

"I wish the club all the best."

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Yeltz rescue point after going down

Halesowen Town 1 Trafford 1
BEN Haseley rescued a point for Halesowen after a host of chances went begging for them to take the match against second-from-bottom Trafford.

Despite starting relegation in the face, a determined Trafford went close after six minutes but home goalkeeper Matt Sargeant had different ideas and saved in a one-on-one with Liam Blake.

It was then one-way traffic as Halesowen took hold of the game and laid siege on a square-looking Trafford defence.

Aaron Daniels snatched at the ball to hit over the bar from five yards and then missed another opportunity when he lofted a weak 17th minute clearance over the bar.

David Meese struck the side-netting and Lyseden Christie hit weakly at Trafford goalkeeper Thomas Read before Christie squandered another chance in the 39th minute when clear on goal.

Adam Jones landed a sucker punch to take the visitors into the lead from Andrew Smart's free-kick in the second minute of first half injury time.

In continued home pressure, Read clawed away a 58th minute shot from Aaron Griffiths and tipped another Griffiths effort over the bar two minutes later.

It was nearly disaster for the yeltz as relegation-bound Trafford almost doubled their lead in the 69th minute but Jeff King planted Sargeant's poor clearance well wide.

The North's resistance was finally broken when Haseley side-stepped his marker to beat Read low down with a 70th minute equaliser from the edge of the penalty area.

Dudley rack up their first double over Wem Town

TEAM Dudley recorded their first league double of 2014/15 as goals from Myles Nettleford and Ryan Spittle settled a tight affair with Wem Town.

Nathan Jones came close to opening the scoring with a free-kick.

Jones had two more opportunities to strike when he fired over the onrushing Ryan Ford and the crossbar and then when he rolled a shot just wide of the far post.

Just after the break Jahmal Patterson was denied by the Wem keeper.

The deadlock was broken on 49 minutes when Jack Turner played Nettleford through and he lobbed Ford.

Wem were level when Matt Cohen raced through and rounded Grant Trevis to score. The visitors went close to taking the lead when Cohen's free-kick hit the crossbar.

But it was Team Dudley who grabbed the all-important second goal.

Spittle latched on to a pass from Nettleford, charged through the Wem back four and calmly slotted the ball home.

Jones breaking could have made it 3-1 but skied an effort over the crossbar.

Heathens looking for perfect start

CRADLEY are desperate to get their National League title defence off to the perfect start when Coventry visit Perry Barr next Wednesday.

The Heathens had mixed feelings after their defeat at the hands of Birmingham in a thriller last Wednesday in the second leg of the Travel Plus Tours Challenge, but they had already done enough to win the trophy.

Now skipper Max Clegg wants to see his side secure all three points in another derby clash.

He said: "Birmingham are our toughest test and we just missed out in a last heat decider against them, but we were the better team over two legs.

Speedway

"Hopefully we can bounce back and get a win under our belt against Coventry next Wednesday which would be the perfect way for us to start the league programme.

Competitive "Coventry haven't had as much racing as we have, it's been good to get a couple of competitive meetings under our belt against Birmingham so hopefully we can be sharper."

Clegg is also full of praise for the bumper crowd which packed Perry Barr with plenty of Heathens

fans making the short trip from the Cradley, Dudley, Stourbridge and Quarry Bank areas. He said: "It was great, coming from Yorkshire I don't know the area that well but I've got an idea that Cradley and the old stadium is about 12 miles from Birmingham so it's brilliant support.

"I hope they carry on for the season ahead because the management need convincing that it can work for everyone at Birmingham.

"I'm proud to be an asset of this great club and I want to be a part of the future here.

"Obviously I want to be a part of taking the club to a track closer to the Cradley area, but Birmingham is where we are at right now."

Tividale get form back to take points

Tividale 2 Stocksbridge 1
TIVIDALE returned to form to grab the Evo-Stik First Division South spoils with a determined display against Stocksbridge Park Steels.

The hosts were on the front foot from the off and created the first chance after 13 minutes when striker Karl Edwards burst through on goal but could only shoot wide under pressure.

Tividale were on top early on took the lead on 22 minutes when a cross into the Stocksbridge penalty area from Nigel Penney was met by Leigh Downing, with his shot taking a deflection off Stocksbridge defender Rory Coleman and wrong-footing keeper Peter Denton.

It was almost 2-0 on 38 minutes when an Edwards header from a Zach Foster corner was cleared off the line by Coleman.

Stocksbridge levelled nine minutes into the second period.

The goal came from an innocuous free-kick 20 yards out from Coleman.

The ball looked to be covered by Tividale keeper Charlie Price but somehow evaded him and it ended up in the back of his net.

It was Tividale who bagged the winner. Substitute Ryan Winwood took on his man down the right wing, played the ball into fellow sub Jordan Archer, who swept the ball out to Downing on the left-side of the penalty area and he fired past Denton.

Tividale then managed the rest of the game with just one serious threat to their goal. That was when a Harrison Biggins free-kick came back off Price's right upright and away to safety.

Tividale's Archer did have one last chance to extend the lead but he could not find the target with his shot.

Villa get to sport home strip in final

VILLA have received a potential good omen after it was revealed they will wear their home kit for next month's FA Cup semi-final.

They have worn the claret and blue strip in every round of the competition so far and will now do so again at Wembley on April 19, after winning a coin toss which will also see them use the 'home' dressing room.

Yet the identity of their opponents will not be known until April 7 when Blackburn and Liverpool contest their sixth-round replay.

Villa have beaten Blackpool, Bournemouth, Leicester and Albion to reach the last four.

Preston Grasshoppers 18 Stourbridge 28
BARRING mathematical miracles Stour secured National 2 rugby in 2015-16 with a bonus-point win from a workmanlike performance at Lightfoot Green.

Two yellow cards meant they played the final quarter with only 14 men, but Nigel Mukarati's early second half try had secured a three-score lead they defended grimly. Preston only breaching the defences with the final whistle imminent.

Stour were turned over in contact early on, Preston fullback Mark Murray brought down just short of the Stour 22.

A knock-on gifted the hosts a short range attacking scrum, but the Stour pack got a nudge on so Preston looked to drive up midfield.

They didn't commit enough bodies to the breakdown though, Ben Barkley securing a turnover from which Stour countered and an excellent kick chase secured a short range penalty.

Caolan Ryan kicked to the corner, Ciaran Moore drove off the maul and Barkley barged his way over with an assist from the post padding.

Kicking

Stour shipped a couple of penalties in the tackle area, Preston kicking for position but good work by Ben Hughes turned over their lineout and Ryan hoofed clear.

Preston ran it back but spilt the ball in contact, and with a two-man overlap the ball was worked to Stef Shillingford who reached halfway before drawing the last defender to put Nathan Bressington clear to score in the corner.

Ryan landed a difficult conversion.

Outside half Lewis Allen pulled back three points when a further indiscretion drew a lecture from referee Michael Harris and a tactical switch as Jordan Page replaced Dale Garner.

A neat Ryan offload put Shillingford through a gap, he made 30m before the cover closed in, his cross-kick shepherded into touch by the defenders.



Stourbridge work one of their lineout drills against Preston

Stour went for a catch & drive but Mukarati couldn't ground it so Drew Harper drove from the base of the scrum to draw 3 defenders, Ciaran Moore crashing over in the follow-up.

Stour briefly lost focus with a rash of wayward passes, eventually conceding a lineout in their own half. Preston moved it down the back line where some indifferent tackle attempts resulted in a try for wing Sam Kendall.

A Preston clearance kick failed to find touch and Stour came again, Barkley carving a hole in the defensive line to be pulled down just short, Mukarati in support for the quick pick and drive that secured the bonus point try.

Allen quickly pulled back three points though from a penalty.

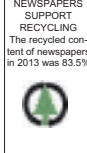
Preston rumbled a maul to just short of the Stour line and launched a wave of attacks that the disciplined defence held.

Preston wouldn't lie down though and a line break by centre Bill Woof reached the shadow of the Stour posts where Dipple was yellow carded for not releasing in the tackle.

A further prolonged assault on the Stour line proved fruitless or the hosts, but finally they attacked from deep, and with Robbie Hurrell down injured Stour's 13 defenders were outflanked, Allen taking a late scoring pass on the Stour 22.

★★★

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